

STAY-AT-HOME-DADS: SYMPTOM OF RECESSION  
OR SUSTAINABLE TREND?

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It rarely happens that a person can honestly stand up and say, “I did it all by myself.” I am certainly not one of them. From my family and friends who supported me through my life goal of getting a Ph.D., to the professors and especially my committee members who guided me to this goal, I wish to say:

THANK YOU!

Namaste

# STAY-AT-HOME-DADS: SYMPTOM OF RECESSION OR SUSTAINABLE TREND?

Abstract

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Giddens' Structuration Theory of "mutual dependence of structure and agency" (1979, p. 69) was used to explore the sustainability of the Stay-At-Home Dad (SAHD) trend in the U.S. Life history interviews of SAHDs (n = 12) were used to explore individual agency, and a survey of the general public (n = 608, age range 18 to 93) was used to investigate cultural structure. Of primary concern was SAHDs ability to re-establish Subjective Well-Being, especially in the light of Social Identity Theory, Tokenism Theory and Social Justification Theory. The U.S. economy is an integral factor in pushing this trend. However, strong connections with their children are a robust compensation factor for SAHDs. Wives also play a key role in initiation and support. Survey responses also showed that women are more aware of, and approve more of SAHDs than men do. Seniors (age 56 to 93) had the least positive attitudes of the four age groupings. This showed a *gemeinschaft—gesellschaft* shift between age groups. Respondents in the age zone most likely to be parents according to U.S. Census Bureau statistics (age 30 to 55) had the most positive attitudes toward SAHDs. This reflects the many couples who are choosing childcare options pragmatically rather than concerning themselves with maintaining tradition. Mapping the trend through Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation showed that SAHDs are primarily innovators, yet there are some indications of the trend advancing to the early adopter stage.

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## INTRODUCTION

I originally became interested in U.S. Stay-At-Home Dads (SAHDs) through the exploration of U.S. women's glass ceiling issues. The "glass ceiling" is a term made popular by a Wall Street Journal article (Hymowitz & Schellhardt, 1986) and refers to the massive trend of women's limited career advancement. Because earning higher-level positions often takes considerable time and focus on company issues, women who also put considerable effort into raising their children are too burdened to reach those higher career goals (e.g. Conlin, 2004; Doherty, 2004; Eriksen, 2004; Healy, 2004; Glass Ceiling Task Force, 2001; Orenstein, 2000; Hochschild, 1989).

The seeds of this trend date back to Industrialization in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, sometimes also referred to as the Victorian Era. Industrialization created the now-prevalent dualistic realms of home and paid work in developed countries, with women in charge of the former and men in charge of the latter. Goaded by a desire for equal citizenship with men and some control (e.g. legal, financial) over their own lives, women's roles in the United States have been expanding into the public realm for over a century (e.g. Kleinberg, 1999; Lockwood, 1988; Harper, 1922). However, the stereotype of women in charge of home and children persists (e.g. Silverstein, 1991; Hochschild, 1989). This overloading of job/career, family, and domestic duties is thought to contribute to the "glass ceiling," in work/life balance and conflict literature (e.g. Conlin, 2004; Doherty, 2004; Eriksen, 2004; Healy, 2004; Glass Ceiling Task Force, 2001; Orenstein, 2000; Hochschild, 1989). Much of this literature discusses the need for "work flexibility [for women] at all levels" (Doherty, 2004, p. 448). Others discuss the need for men, as well as women, to be able to use flexible work schedules. However, some

organizations have flex options written into corporate policies, but the use of them by men is frequently frowned upon (Kirby & Krone, 2002).

Stay-At-Home Dads do not represent a movement, but are instead a relatively new trend concerning changes in the concepts of marriage, masculinity and cultural norms of the male sex role. The implications envelop, not just many women's drive to higher echelons in the workplace, but also the acceptance of men having more life options. If women are generally over-stretched between work and domestic/child-rearing realms, then men are also stymied as they are stuffed into work-only life choices.

Stay-At-Home Dads represent a group taking on an extreme counter-role in society. They offer the opportunity to study cultural acceptance, psychological well-being, and communication at important junctures. By understanding SAHDs better, we can also become more aware of issues affecting men's role expansion in general.

Of primary interest to me in this study is the question of whether or not the Stay-At-Home Dad role is a sustainable trend. A temporary effect cannot be considered a part of a solution to a problem that is both complex and historically engrained. Therefore, sustainability is an important question.

*RQ<sub>1</sub>*: Is the Stay-At-Home Dad role in the U.S. a sustainable trend?

I use Giddens' (1979) Structuration Theory to help answer this question, which concerns the "mutual dependence of structure and agency" (p. 69). Structures are both the means (resources) and the product of actions. Human agency recreates inexact duplicates, modifying structures while interacting with them. According to May and Mumby (2005), Giddens' Structuration Theory considers three dimensions of human consciousness:

discursive, practical and unconscious. As its title suggests, discursive consciousness is what people can communicate in words. Practical consciousness, on the other hand, encompasses the “knowledge and skills we can’t put into words but use in action” (p.176). Experiences that we are not aware of constitute the unconscious. This study incorporates qualitative life history interviews of Stay-At-Home Dads and a quantitative survey of the general public to explore both the structure and agency of this trend.

When is a trend sustainable? A way to answer this is through Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation Theory (1962). His original Diffusion of Innovation Theory concerned the communication of new technologies, but his theory has also been applied to health issues and social innovation (e.g. Macias, 2006; Payne, Radspieler & Payne, 2002). He breaks down the process of adopting innovation into five stages: knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation. People may not pass through all these stages and thereby avoid adopting an innovation. Those that do adopt, pass through these stages at different rates, which can be geometrically plotted as five groupings along an S curve. The bottom of the S represents the first two groups to adopt an innovation; they are innovators and early adopters. The next two groups adopt on a steeper angle; these are the early and late majorities. Finally, the adoption curve levels off with the last group, the laggards.

In order to predict a future of this trend in the United States, it is necessary to review the historical context and provide working definitions. The following literature review covers a definition of Stay-At-Home Dads, context of societal definitions of masculinity and the male sex role in the United States, the importance of establishing Subjective Well-Being, and theoretical-based barriers to that goal.

## LITURATURE REVIEW

### *Stay-At-Home Dads*

The 2006 U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Report tracks Stay-At-Home family groups, defined as “married-couple family groups with children under 15 where one parent is in the labor force all of the previous year and their spouse is out of the labor force for the entire year with the reason ‘taking care of home and family.’” Stay-At-Home Dads, then, are husbands who have not worked in the past year to care for their home and children up to the age of 15. Other groups, including other branches of the U.S. Census Bureau and SAHD support group networks/websites, expand this definition to include any man who is the primary caregiver for his children. The Census Bureau (2004) refers to primary care as the situation in which the child spends the most time. This can include fathers who are full-time, part-time or self-employed. My working definition for this study embraces the latter definition.

Stay-At-Home Dads are a phenomenon in more countries than just the United States. They are becoming common in Canada (Marshall, 1999), are emerging in China (People’s Daily Online, 2009), exist in Japan (Mutsumi, 1999) and in South Korea (JoongAng Daily, 2007), and constitute a tenacious trend in the United Kingdom (“Marigold Man,” 2009; Harries, 2010). Muslim countries, however, do not look favorably on this role (AsiaNews, 2006).

I pragmatically focused on SAHDs in the United States because I am interested in U.S. glass ceiling issues. Additionally, the available numbers in this country appear to be among the most robust, though variable. For example, U.S. Census Bureau Editor’s Desk

(TED) in 2005 shows childcare by father for 11.3 million children from birth to age six, with mother working 35 or more hours per week, is 25 percent or roughly 2.8 million. However, using the U.S. Census Bureau, Historical Table of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (2008), SAHD numbers are much lower for the same year. As of 2005, the estimate is 17.2 thousand. This number is based on the more strict definition mentioned above. In this strict definition, the SAHD population has also been tracked since 1985 as shown in *Table 1* below. Interesting to note is the high point in 1991, the second year of an economic slump in the U.S. (Encyclopedia of Nations, 2010).

**Table 1: Excerpt from Historical Table. Primary Child Care Arrangements of Preschoolers with Employed Mothers: Selected Years, 1985 to 2005. U.S. Census Bureau, Survey of Income and Program Participation. Internet release date: February 2008.**

SAHDs in thousands	15.7	15.1	16.5	20.0	15.9	16.6	17.7	17.1	17.5	17.2
Year	1985	1988	1990	1991	1993	1995	1997	1999	2002	2005

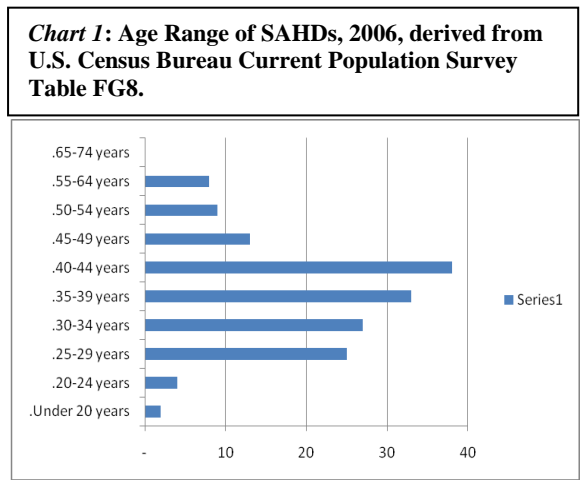
For contextual comparison, it is interesting to note that the 2006 U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Report shows that nearly one in four (23.4 percent) of mothers in married family groups chose to stay home with their children. By comparison, .7 (less than one percent) of fathers in married family groups chose to stay home with their children that year.

SAHD blogs talk of these reported numbers as being too low (e.g. Reid, 2007). I suggest that the primary problem here lies in the different SAHD definitions, as described above. Additionally, survey respondents may be inconsistent or unable to specify answers. The U.S. Census Bureau tries to reach the designated parent, which it defines as

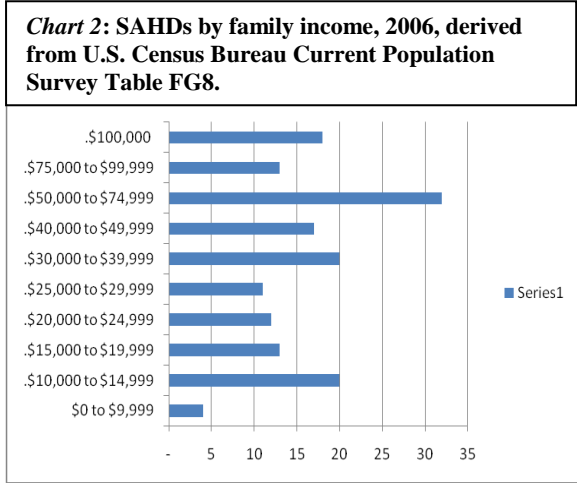
the mother in married couples, or the father if the mother is not available, or the resident parent in single-parent homes (U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Economic Statistics Division, Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, 2005). In short, all statistics are best estimates. The most solid conclusion seems to be that numbers are generally increasing.

In spite of these dilemmas, it is the best available information. I used The U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Table FG8 (2006) to garner demographic information about SAHDs in the U.S. All of the following demographic charts come from this table.

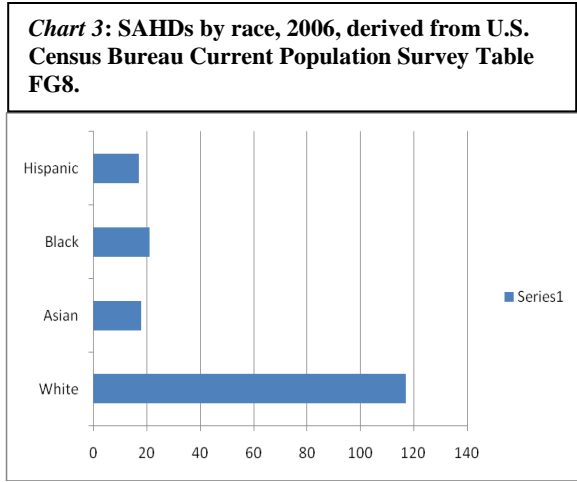
Including the major ethnicities in the U.S., the number of SAHDs leap to considerably higher numbers beginning at the 25 to 29 age group. Numbers steadily increase until the peak 40 to 44 age group, after which they dramatically decline.



While SAHDs exist in all recorded categories of family income, the highest spike in number of SAHDs occur in the family income category of \$50,000 to \$74,999. This is considered a middleclass income. Spikes in other categories that fit the broad middleclass include \$100,000+; \$40,000 to \$49,999; and \$30,000 to \$39,999. The spike in the \$10,000 to \$14,999 category is at the poverty level.

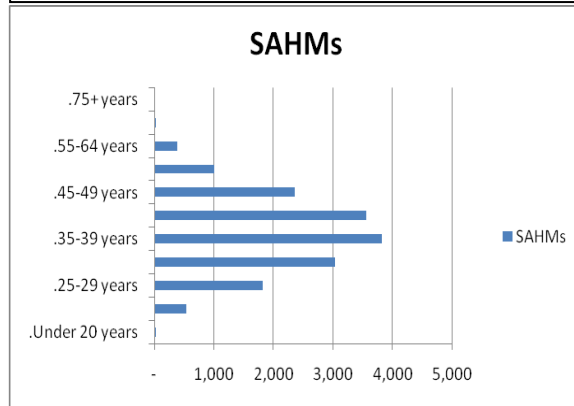


The U.S. Census Bureau tracks SAHDs by race, including White, Asian, Black and Hispanic. White is by far the largest category, more than all the others put together.



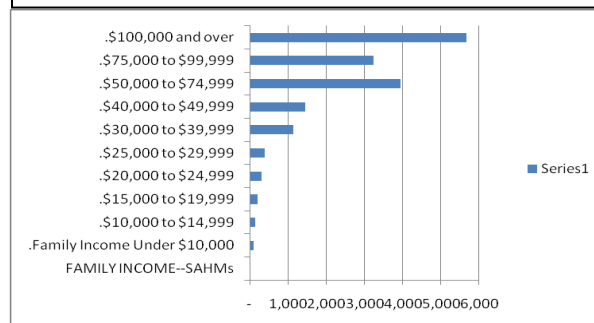
By comparison, Stay-At-Home Moms gradually increase in number to the peak age category of 35 to 39, and then gradually decrease. In the graph below you can see this forms a regular bell curve.

**Chart 4: Age Range of SAHMs, 2006, derived from U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Table FG8.**



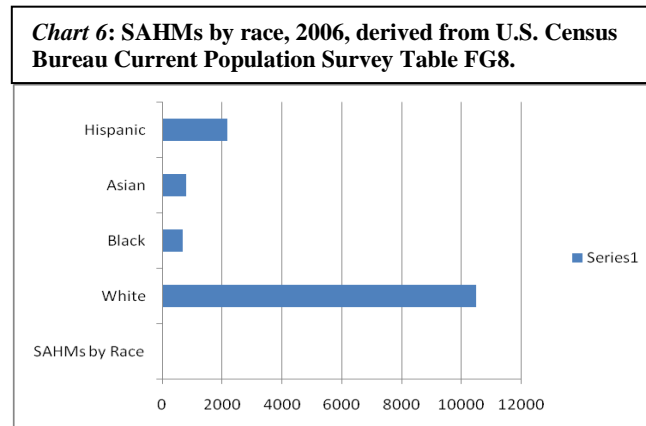
Unlike SAHDs, SAHMs stay relatively low in numbers in family income categories until a striking spike at the \$50,000 to \$74,999 category. The peak family income category for SAHMs is \$100,000 and over.

**Chart 5: SAHMs by family income, 2006, derived from U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Table FG8.**





Just as the White SAHDs group is larger than all the other races put together, SAHMs are also principally White. This shows that the practice of having a parent stay home to care for children is primarily a White phenomenon.



Income, “race” and age have been bandied about, but are there other demographic points in common? The life history interviews offer an opportunity to search for background points SAHDs have in common. These interviews also offer a chance to see if SAHD demographics align with the innovators and early adopters described in Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation Theory.

*RQ<sub>2</sub>*: Do SAHDs have common elements in their life histories?

Aside from this basic information about U.S. SAHDs, it is important to consider the historical context that both stymies and allows this trend. The meaning of masculinity and the concept of the male sex role are discussed next.

*Masculinity, and Male Sex Role Expectations in the U.S.*

Meissner (2005) provides a useful definition of gender identity as a combination of both *core gender identity*, “an immutable sense of being a boy or girl that is solidified by the end of the second year [in childhood]” (p. 1), and *gender role identity*, “an internal gendered sense of self as masculine or feminine, as multiply determined by biological, sociological, and psychological components” (p. 1). Thus, individuals have a core gender identity, culturally induced but largely static from early childhood, and a gender role identity built through life experiences and interaction, and through self-filtering.

The notions of American masculinity have roots that solidified during the American Revolution. These notions include “independent, self-controlled, responsible... industrious... the breadwinner... a self-made man” (Kimmel, 1996, p. 18 & 20). Males owned all property and were “the indisputable authority over all its dependants, his wife and children, servants and apprentices” (Stone & McKee, 1999, p. 18).

By the Victorian/Industrial Age, the nearly ubiquitous Britain Empire spread its views of male and female roles as polar opposites. Tosh (1999), who sifted through advice literature and memoirs of the era, argues that the developing polarization was not just a matter of burgeoning industrial factories creating a place of paid work away from home for Victorian men. An equally important factor was the developing middle class desire to emulate the upper classes, who did not work regularly for a living. Thus, as families entered middle class, the wife stopped being a “help meet” (1999, p. 19) or junior partner to her husband in business. While a middle class woman who did not involve herself in the household production of goods for market was previously criticized, during the Victorian era, a non-working wife was a symbol of greater affluence

and higher social status for the family. Further success entailed acquiring household servants, especially the higher-paid male servants, and moving to pastoral settings that were away from the noisy, polluted factory centers. The home also stopped being a hostel for apprentices and industry laborers, especially when the home no longer resided near the factory. Tocqueville (1863), was among the first to note this division of male/female spheres in the United States.

As work and home became separate realms, polarized male and female roles became a common propaganda point in the literature of the time:

Again and again, the dichotomies of energy and repose, intellect and feeling, resolution and adaptability, were seen to divide humankind into two quite different elements. The feminine home was the place for nurture and love, the masculine world for restless energy and rationality (Tosh, 1999, p.47).

In spite of this prevailing view, Victorian fathers were not all strangers to their infants and generals to their older children. Tosh found considerable diversity among them, including those who were very nurturing. However, the stereotype of the Victorian era persisted and cast a lingering shadow far into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This era “witnessed both the climax of masculine domesticity and the first major reaction against it. In that sense the Victorians prefigured a dialectic which has continued from that day to this” (Tosh, 1999, p. 196).

At beginning the 20<sup>th</sup> century, British and American fathers were expressly interested in asserting standards of masculinity. Boys below the age of six were no longer dressed as little girls (Robson, 2001, p. 4) and toys aimed at masculine pursuits became popular purchases. Responding to the escalating women’s rights movement and the

impelling glamour of industrial fortunes, Boy Scouts, YMCA, Knights of King Arthur, Boone and Crocket Club, gyms and male athletic clubs, and similar male-oriented youth organizations were created to prepare boys for the rigors of life as a male adult (Kimmel, 1996). Established by Boer War hero, General Baden-Powell, Boy Scouts were introduced in Britain and then in the United States and internationally, as a method of “reassertion of manly values of this time” (Tosh, 1999, p. 196). Particularly in the United States, the cowboy was a prevalent and admirable male model of desired traits such as the ethical self-made man (Kimmel, 1996). The plethora of cowboy movies made in the U.S. during the 1950s and 60s, and the Jedi knights of the Star Wars movie series in the 1980s show the lingering love affair with the cowboy archetype (Kimmel, 1996).

“Breadwinner” became one of the most salient descriptors for American men (Gearson, 1993; Griswold, 1993). Weber’s (1905) work on the Protestant ethic showed how men were so focused on making money that it became their life’s purpose. Tocqueville expressed the U.S. fascination with accumulating money as an important male trait, as the result of democratic societies:

Amongst aristocratic nations, money reaches only to a few points on the vast circle of man’s desires: in democracies, it seems to lead all. In an orderly and peaceable democracy like the United States, where men cannot enrich themselves by war, by public office, or by political confiscation, the love of wealth mainly drives them into business and manufactures (Tocqueville, 1863, p. 279).

After World War II, the United States experienced a period of prosperity. Magazines and the popular new entertainment medium of television shows such as *Father Knows Best*, praised family life as verging on the sacred. Men were encouraged to

be active fathers, albeit as a weekend occupation, because the main role extolled for men was breadwinner (Kimmel, 1996). Additionally, women were buttressed as essential and irreplaceable at home, especially in the care of their children (Winnicott, 1957).

By the 1970s, psychologists David and Brannon had distilled four primary components of the male sex role in the United States: (1) “no sissy stuff” (1976, p.49) — reject the feminine, (2) “be a big wheel” (1976, p.89) —economic success trumps all, (3) “be a sturdy oak” (1976, p.161) —the brawny independence inherited from the founding of the U.S. and (4) “give ‘em hell” (1976, p.199) —be aggressive risk-takers. Being a *Big Wheel*, or at least the breadwinner, is most central circle in the target of the salient male role adjectives:

[The] American male bases his masculine identity so narrowly on the breadwinning role, since it occupies—both psychically and physically—the central position in his life. [H]is wife is naturally inclined to see him in the same utilitarian way (Brenton, 1966 in David and Brannon 1976, p. 92).

Gearson (1993) also noted the prevalence of the breadwinner stereotype among her interviewees in spite of a drastically changing culture in which the middle class family is more often dual-income than the traditional one-income breadwinner. In the span of a generation, from the 1970s to the turn of the century, the daily life of American middle class has undergone a silent upheaval:

Men who have reached adulthood in recent decades have confronted confusing circumstances. The stagnation of wages has undermined their capacity to support a family alone. Women’s entry into the workplace has challenged their preeminence as breadwinners and workers. The sexual revolution has eroded the

double standard, and the revolution in cohabitation and divorce has loosened the bonds of marriage. These trends have undermined the foundations of men's modern privileges, but they have also given men opportunities to pursue new paths, claim new freedoms, and develop new identities (1993, p. 4).

Other researchers in the 1990s have noticed a change in the defining elements of masculinity. A "sensitive New Age guy" masculinity (Kimmel, 1996, p. 293) has also grown in popularity. Harris (1994), in a landmark study of over 500 men, found the theme of "Nurturer: men [who] are gentle, supportive, warm, sensitive, and concerned about others' feelings," (p. 111) to be one of "the dominant themes or ideals underscoring masculinity in the United States" (p. 104).

In Gearson's (1993) study, she found that sons overwhelmingly seem to have registered "the costs as well as the benefits of [their fathers'] choices" (p. 46). A "notable proportion of sons report a closer involvement or the desire for a closer involvement, with their own children" (p. 49). Some men "concluded that having a distant father had cost them heavily, even if no one else appeared to suffer. And they wished for the fathering they had missed" (p. 51).

The American poet and activist, Robert Bly, also strongly reflects this sentiment in his infamous book, *Iron John: A book about men* (1990). Bly takes a Jungian approach, arguing that men need to cut themselves off from the ideologies of the current culture and create their own definitions of "father" and "masculinity." He focuses on ancient stories as a guide and anchor for divesting the stifling standards of the current era.

Gearson's study, however, shows that many men are pragmatically reacting to current economic stressors and cultural changes for women, work, and marriage.

“[C]hildhood predispositions do not foretell men’s latter life choices” (Gearson, 1993, p. 74). Of the three main groups of men identified in this study, primary breadwinners and the large subgroup of reluctant breadwinners, autonomous men, and involved fathers, none could be identified as stemming from specific types of relationships—or lack of them—with their fathers. Reluctant breadwinners were men who followed the flow of the cultural norm, feeling that they “fell into the stable job/breadwinner role” because of opportunities and rewards that just came their way (p. 105). Autonomous men were those who felt claustrophobic in their jobs, and were constantly searching for “freedom from work or freedom at work” (p. 138). Involved fathers “chose either intrinsically satisfying or less demanding work, even at the expense of lower pay and prestige. They also chose employment that made it easier to balance family and work” (p. 143). “For most,” Gearson comments, “later life experiences will reflect the larger forces of social change” (p.61). What does unite them is “their initial aversion to traditional definitions of masculine success” (p. 105).

Additionally, these current trends of women in the workforce, economic stressors, sharp increases in divorce and cohabitation are all anticipated to be long-term trends:

The entire pattern of traditional life is collapsing, and no clear patterns are emerging yet... Longer life, the decline in fertility rates, and the additional years of education [for jobs] have all contributed to the dissolution of previous life and social patterns... Women are having fewer children because supporting a lot of children in industrial, urban society is economic suicide (Friedman, 2009, p. 59).

He further argues that these sweeping trends in the United States are out-bound for adoption internationally:

The United States is socially imitated and politically condemned. It sits on the ideological fault line of the international system. As populations decline due to shifts in reproductive patterns, the United States becomes the center for radically redefined modes of social life (Friedman, 2009, p. 64).

While Friedman does not see any emerging clear patterns for the new cultural norm, I think that the trend will be more diversity—more choices for men. Researchers have been calling for this. Kimmel finished his history of the American male sex role with a call for ending the need to continually prove one's masculinity: "American manhood can no longer be based on obsessive self-control, defensive exclusion, or frightened escape...or about the size of their biceps or their wallets." (Kimmel, 1996, p. 333).

This dovetails with Brenton's previous convictions:

[T]he fact is that by depending so heavily on his breadwinning role to validate his sense of himself as a man, instead of letting his roles as husband, father, and citizen of the community count as validating sources, the American male treads on psychically dangerous ground (1966, in David and Brannon 1976, p. 92).

Gearson (1999) describes an alternate male sex role of involved fathers who were, "compared to primary breadwinners... more likely to veer away from high-pressured careers or to hit an occupational dead end" (p. 170). Involved fathers were also more likely than both autonomous men and primary breadwinners, to "become involved or to seek involvement with a career- or work-committed partner. Further, they were more likely to have gratifying experiences with children and caretaking" (p. 170).



Stay-At-Home Dads represent a segment of male society that is managing to function outside the narrow confines of the traditional male sex role stereotype, and most obviously outside the nearly ubiquitous adjective of breadwinner. However, there are costs to such an endeavor. In the next section, I discuss the various challenges to living in opposition to mainstream cultural norms.

### *Establishing Subjective Well-Being*

Men who embrace the Stay-At-Home Dad role are carving a new niche in a culture that traditionally views masculinity in a hegemonic patriarchal fashion, one in which masculinity is largely defined by career and paycheck (Kimmel, 1996; Harris, 1994). This traditional tie of masculinity with finances and power also creates an inner dissonance for SAHDs, since they withdraw from the workforce as their primary function. Additionally, perceived social regard of SAHDs is lowest when compared to working fathers, working mothers, and Stay-At-Home Moms (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005). Benjamin (1988) refers to the necessity of recognition from others to define self, and I argue that this negative reflection can create a social identity crisis as described below.

Yet there are SAHDs, who have been in this role for more than a year, and who talk of not only how they enjoy the role, but also of altering career or work-from-home plans to accommodate their children's needs. These men are comfortable enough with their role to be interviewed on television (Varvus, 2002) or by newspaper reporters (e.g. Goldberg, 1991; Cardozo, 1993; Ernest, 1995; Zernike, 1998; Conlin, 2001; Showley, 2003). These are men who have been able to establish a sense of well-being. This is an

important hurdle, as one of three cornerstones to quality of life (Diener & Suh, 1998). In a utilitarian mindset, economic, social, and subjective (personal) well-being constitute “the good life” (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003, p. 405). Establishing Subjective Well-Being (SWB) is foundational to sustaining the Stay-At-Home Dad trend. It is a cornerstone over which individuals have considerable control.

Diener argues that well-being is a unique answer for each individual—a sense of subjective well-being determined by “people’s own evaluations of their own lives [as developed by the components of ] life satisfaction... satisfaction with important domains... positive affect... and low levels of negative affect” (2000, p. 34). Life satisfaction is a higher order of magnitude than satisfaction with important domains, because it is overall satisfaction. This is different from “satisfaction of important domains,” which is not so holistic. Diener posits that some people have a buoyant SWB; they adapt to changing circumstances faster than others due to their temperament (p. 37), and by adjusting their goals and expectations (p.38).

As part of my overall quest of exploring sustainability of this trend, I use Diener’s SWB components to explore SWB levels of SAHDs I interview:

*RQ<sub>3</sub>*: Did SAHDs take on this role by choice, or because of economic circumstances?

*RQ<sub>4</sub>*: Do SAHDs feel enough satisfaction with their role to continue it long-term?

*RQ<sub>5</sub>*: What are the positive affects of being a SAHD?

There are a number of theories that indicate being a SAHD would cause a well-being crisis. Most important among these is Social Identity Theory.

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) provides three key elements in which to explore the role of SAHDs. The first is that people categorize themselves and others according to group membership. Any one person belongs to multiple groups and subgroups, such as parent, occupation, hobbies, alma mater, and religious affiliation. Categorization offers a way for individuals to understand their environment, to define appropriate behavior, and explain who they are. Group identification, the second element, refers to how much the individual matches with the salient traits and behaviors that identify the group. This affiliation feeds self-esteem, especially in the scenario of strong affiliation with a socially respected group. Thirdly, social comparison between groups is a way to feel positive about one's own group, and by association, to feel positive about oneself. On the down side, it contributes to "us" and "them" thinking. Liu and Hilton (2005) further discuss social identity of in-group members as providing stories for historical identity anchors as well as "maps" for reacting to current issues and circumstances. This coincides with the neo-Freudian analysis provided by Benjamin (1988), who refers to the necessity of recognition from others to define self. In-group members reflect and approve of the core, salient, features that define the group. Thus, they provide each other with a positive social identity within the group. Groups that are well accepted in society provide even more reinforcement for that social identity.

One of the first pieces of information that people generally want to know about a newborn is whether the baby is a boy or girl. This is the beginning of the categorization process that channels boys into culturally acceptable male roles as well as encourages girls to follow acceptable female roles.

In addition to Social Identity Theory, Tokenism, Social Regard, and Social Justification Theory are also extremely useful. These theories reflect the difficulty of re-establishing and/or maintaining well-being in such a counter-cultural role as Stay-At-Home Dads.

Divergence from a society's established gender role identity, then, places stress on those initial few who deviate from the established "path." Kanter (1977) describes the plight of tokens, or extremely small minority groups, as isolated, highly visible, and negatively stereotyped. As tokens traverse the territory of a dominant group, they are more visible than any one dominant member, they are subject to polarization (exaggeration of differences), and impressions of the tokens' characteristics will be distorted to fit those generalizations (Kanter, 1977, p.8). While she focused on tokens in organizational settings, these adjectives certainly apply to SAHDs. Unlike male nurses, who were frequently recast by hospital patients as doctors (Floge & Merrill, 1985), SAHDs do not seem to reap the benefits of being male in a predominantly female activity. Brescoll and Uhlmann (2005) found that SAHDs were rated with the lowest social regard in a comparison with working fathers, working mothers, and Stay-At-Home Moms. Further, Social Justification Theory (Jost and Banaji, 1994) points out that when minority groups identify with the established societal organization and activities, they partake in their own subordination. Therefore, not only are there fewer in-group members from whom the minority person can draw social support, but there is pressure from mainstream society and even themselves to conform to established identities.

Diener's "negative affect" can be viewed through the tokenism issues described above. For SAHDs, isolation can be due in part to the at-home childcare process in

American culture that is also common with Stay-At-Home Moms. Additionally, SAHDs may feel acute isolation as males in a traditionally female role. They are also very visible, often singular dads in a sea of moms. Negative stereotyping is a “negative affect” when friends, family and strangers think of them as lazy or unemployable.

Social Identity Theory may also explain some aspects of Diener’s “negative affect,” owing to the categorization process involved. While the number of SAHDs has been mostly increasing over the past 25 years, people may still not have a category for them. Thus, people may have difficulty connecting with SAHDs when they meet one, as they feel they have nothing in common. People may incorrectly categorize SAHDs as stalkers, kidnapers or child molesters because they do not have a SAHD category in their schema of male roles (e.g. Star, 2000; Cipriani, 1999; Amoroso, 1996).

Additionally, SAHDs may reject membership in parenting groups that are primarily female, because of their own minority identity as male primary-care parent. The following questions aim to answer the Diener’s (2000) “negative affect” component:

*RQ<sub>6</sub>*: How much is SAHD isolation due to “negative affect” of tokenism?

*RQ<sub>7</sub>*: To what extent do SAHDs feel that they are the focus of negative stereotyping?

*RQ<sub>8</sub>*: Have SAHDs experienced social difficulties due to people inadequately or incorrectly grouping them?

*RQ<sub>9</sub>*: Do SAHDs partake in their own subordination?

Diener posits that some people adapt to changing circumstances faster than others due to their temperament (2000, p. 37) and by adjusting their goals and expectations (p.

38). I argue that long-term SAHDs, as innovators and early adopters (see Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory above), are more resilient and open to change, and thus are more able to re-establish subjective well-being (SWB) in a counter-culture role. I also argue that innovators and early adopters have considerable overlap with Postmaterialists.

Inglehart's (1971) Postmaterialism Theory began as an attempt to discover what motivated people to embrace new social movements. He created an ordinal survey based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (see Maslow, 1987), and found two main clusters with a high cross-national consistency, which he dubbed Postmaterialists and Materialists. Postmaterialists focus on social- and self-actualization needs, whereas Materialists are more concerned with physiological and economic needs. Postmaterialists (Inglehart, 1971) and Innovators (Rogers, 1962) are both described as having a predominantly middleclass economic background, relatively high levels of education and social class, are politically and environmentally aware, and feel relatively secure or have risk tolerance. In connecting Inglehart's Postmaterialists to Diener's Subjective Well-Being, it is important to realize demographics are not temperament. However, I argue that this kind of privileged life lends itself to the development of flexible temperament, and thus resilient SWB.

Long-term SAHDs have done two things; they have *adopted* an innovation and then *adapted* to the new environment. I have already discussed adaptation and now turn to adopting, using Rogers' (1962) Diffusion of Innovation Theory. While some SAHDs defaulted to the role because of layoffs, many of those interviewed by the media talk of making a conscious choice to adopt the role long term (e.g. DeNardo, 2004; Juen, 2003;

Staton, 2000). Taking on a counter-cultural role long term, and being willing to be extremely visible in a news story, suggests that these men have re-established SWB.

Further, Rogers (1962) describes the early adopter as a “lighthouse customer,” whose positive or negative comments can affect the innovation process. I have reviewed 321 newspaper and magazine articles written by and about SAHDs from 1989 to 2008, and most are positively oriented. This is a span of nearly 20 years, an amount of time that could encompass a second generation of SAHDs. Therefore, some SAHDs may serve a lighthouse function to other new parents who are making childcare decisions.

The fact that SAHDs are primarily taking on fatherhood in midlife (30s-40s) deserves further scrutiny. Erikson (1980, 1982) proposed a theory of life cycle stages with a dominating struggle for each stage. While he did not pinpoint a specific age, or even an age range, for the adulthood stage, he has some useful observations about it. The struggle at this stage is between generativity and stagnation. He defines generativity as “establishing and guiding the next generation” (1980, p. 103). However, the “parental responsibility” drive can be absorbed by “forms of altruistic concern and creativity” (1980, p. 103). If this drive is not fulfilled, individuals feel a sense of “stagnation and interpersonal impoverishment” (1980, p. 103), often turning themselves into their own indulged child.

Lipinski (1984), a psychologist interested in intrapersonal reminiscence in late life, argues that many men are not aware that their narrow gender role expectations are filling others' expectations. Unlike women, who draw from home and work for identity, men are more at risk of identifying only with emotionally empty jobs, then suffering a mid-life crisis of meaningless work. That is, they have failed to be generative.

Wethington (2000) makes a connection between Erikson's generativity and people around age 40, who "reach a symbolic (or physical) marker of age" (p. 86). Although I do not consider SAHDS to be in a midlife crisis, I do think they have reached a point when they want more than what their jobs are providing.

I think the desire to have children, and to savor the experience of raising them, is a primary motivator for men to become long-term SAHDS. Whether they originally fell into the role because of layoffs or financial issues (cost of childcare versus earnings), they have found a way to be standard bearers (Harris, 1994), and to satisfy their need to be generative (Erikson, 1980; 1982) in being a primary caregiver to their children. To review, "life satisfaction... satisfaction with important domains... positive affect... and low levels of negative affect" (2000, p. 34) are Diener's proponents of SWB. Being generative versus stagnant is certainly a way to enhance SWB. Further, SAHDS commonly report how much they were enjoying being with their children (e.g. Elias, 2007; Tomlin, 2007; Barrett, 2007). I think this overwhelmingly positive affect makes up for much of the "negative affect" that comes from society. Long-term SAHDS have both the motivation and the means to initiate a change and re-establish Subjective Well-Being.

To investigate this assumption, it is important to understand the "negative affects" that challenge Stay-At-Home Dads. In the next section, I discuss the "negative affects" of negative stereotyping and traditionalism.

### *Negative Stereotyping and Traditionalism*

Greenfield's theory of social change and human development is based on *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, two "sociodemographic prototypes" originally introduced



by Tönnies in 1887 (English translation, 1957). Pure *gemeinschaft*, or community, has the following attributes: “rural, small scale, simple division of labor, low technology, education only at home [with] a lack of literacy, internal homogeneity, relatively self-contained, subsistence activities, poorer [people], and lifelong social relations with interdependent kin” (Greenfield, p. 402). Pure *gesellschaft*, or society, has these attributes: “urban, large scale, complex differentiated roles, high technology, most education is at school, literacy, regular contact with the outside world, [an economy based on] commerce, money, and accumulation of goods, wealthier, fleeting social relationships with independent strangers” (Greenfield, p. 402). These are two dimensions in which cultures can be categorized, according to how the pendulum currently swings on each of the opposing sociodemographics just listed. There is no stasis, and the current overall world trend has been a shift away from *gemeinschaft*, toward *gesellschaft*. Shifts in the other direction (toward *gemeinschaft*, away from *gesellschaft*) can occur in individual cultures or in aggregate. A reverse flow example happened when the Western Roman Empire fell and Europe devolved into small kingdoms with a declining literacy. While this may be construed as a negative shift, both dimensions have positive as well as negative attributes.

What is important about this theory in the context of Stay-At-Home Dads is that it helps explain different mindsets across generations born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Greenfield (2009), the sociodemographics affect cultural and learning values and thus human development. In the U.S., older generations from the beginning of that century, grew up with the stereotype of women having inherent nurturing abilities, and therefore were needed as the first primary caregivers to babies and children. There are senior

citizens alive today who were born in the same decade as the adoption of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which allowed women the right to vote. Yet, even among the suffrage workers, motherhood was a sacred charge. Susan B. Anthony was so widely known as a traveling speaker for woman's suffrage, because she was not tethered by husband or children. Lucretia Mott, one of the original founders of the movement in the U.S. who also raised five children to adulthood, traveled less. As the century progressed through two world wars, technology increased and the economy prospered. Higher education became more available to men and women, becoming the norm rather than something special. Equally as common now is the two-income household, in which both husband and wife contribute financially to their nuclear family. Children now represent more economic expenditure than income for parents. Thus, within the current population, there is a shift from a more *gemeinschaft* dimension to a *hyper gesellschaft* one (Greenfield, 2009).

As described in the Social Identity Theory section above, people rely on their group categories to help them determine appropriate social interaction. What happens when a person cannot be categorized? I think that people will make judgments, dependant on environmental context, that attempt to fit the unknown person into known categories. This may be an unconscious and heuristic process. Briefly, the heuristic response involves short-cut reactions instead of logical, systematic thought processing (see Shrum in Bryant & Zillmann, 2002). It is faster than systematic processing, often a benefit in crises, but also often based on emotion-enhanced memories from such stimuli as amount and type of media viewing, word of mouth, and only partially on direct experience.

Stay-At-Home Dads are often mistaken as dad-the-babysitter (e.g. Hartlaub, 2006). The difference in outlook is that the dad-the-babysitter category comes with the stereotype of inept parent. This stereotype focuses on the bumbling neophyte men-in-domestic-role portrayed specifically in the movie, *Mr. Mom*, as well as its predecessor, *Kramer vs. Kramer*, and the more recent *Daddy Daycare*. Unfortunately, the successful man at the home front, which all of the main characters in these movies achieve, seems to be ignored.

More irksome are the moms who will not let their children come over to play when the SAHD is the only adult in the house (Stewart, 2001), the older relatives who view them with skepticism, and Stay-At-Home Moms who avoid them (Dunnewind, 2005). Parks and playgrounds can be negative places for SAHDs, as women are more on the alert for stalkers (Shaver, 2007). Short-cut emotional (heuristic) reactions makes women extra cautious about men in these contexts during regular work hours. Media reports and SAHDs' letters-to-editors describe police questioning dads who are hanging around parks (Shaver, 2007), camping with their children (Cipriani, 1999), and walking out of the mall with a crying child (Starr, 2000).

The examples of park stalker and child abductor, I argue, are strong indicators of people not having a category for SAHDs. While the other examples are not as severe, they also indicate stereotyping and a lack of trust. These are not daily occurrences for SAHDs, but I think they have occurred frequently enough to sensitize SAHDs to a general gap of a place in society for them. These experiences, along with Brescoll and Uhlmann's (2005) low social regard findings for SAHDS, indicate society's resistance to men expanding their role.

I expect to find response differences to SAHDs owing to age variation. This would be consistent with a *Gemeinschaft*—*Gesellschaft* shift, because I think this represents a shift in mindset as well. I also think that career-minded women will be more motivated to be open to the concept of SAHDs, while traditionally-minded men will rate SAHMs higher for traditional traits.

*H*<sub>1</sub>: Attribute levels for Stay-At-Home Dads will be more negative than for Stay-At-Home Moms.

*H*<sub>2</sub>: Females rate SAHDs higher than males rate SAHDs.

*H*<sub>3</sub>: Male respondents rate SAHMS higher than female respondents on traditional role variables.

It is also useful to consider the differences between the overall favorable tone toward White SAHDs versus the widely divergent attitudes portrayed toward minority or low household income SAHDs. Black men, for example, have been stereotyped as absentee or “dead-beat” fathers (e.g. Albom, 2010; More Dads at Home, 2010). Some articles extol Black fathers who are actively involved with their children (e.g. Kinnon, 2003; McCovey, 2007). Other articles have interviewed Black SAHDs who talk about how rare they are, because, as one Black SAHD remarked, “It’s unreal among black men. You don’t stay home from a good job to be with your kids” (Shaver, 2007, p. A01).

While middleclass SAHDs are most commonly portrayed in the media, the 2006 U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Report, Table FG8, shows half of SAHDs are in families with an annual income of less than \$40,000. These are the SAHDs whom I think are not comfortable making their role public, even after a long term (year

or more) in the role. This can skew the media's portrayal of SAHDs (Varvus, 2002). People in society, however, may be aware of SAHDs at poverty level and of different ethnicities ("race" in U.S. Census Bureau terms).

In spite of traditional masculine stereotypes that men are aggressive and competitive (David & Brannon, 1976), nurturing is a documented trait among men (e.g. Kimmel, 1996). Like letting a genie out of a bottle, SAHDs often surprise themselves when they are able to stretch emotionally in nurturing their children (e.g. Warren, 2002; Thoman, 1999; Baldauf, 1997). In the following section, I address this issue.

### *Nurturing and Empathy*

Before beginning this discussion, it is important to remember that I am tracking the historical context for mainstream U.S. culture. This is a limited view of fathering considering the range of parenting options displayed around the world. For example, Aka Pygmy children suckle freely on both men and women in their group, and fathers care for children as much as mothers (Hewlett & Lamb, 2005).

Empathy is defined as the ability to understand others as self (Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary, 1983, p.594), and as "redirected attachment" (Mageo, 2011) that is foundational for nurturing. In Western cultures, it is epitomized as a mother's care for her child—in art, as Madonna and child.

The definition of nurturing suggests that this term has many different forms. Webster's New Universal Unabridged Dictionary includes the forms of "providing food, education, training, to cherish, and to generally promote development" (1983, p. 1229). If nurturing is defined as providing the necessities for a child to grow mentally and

physically into a functioning member of society, then Maslow's hierarchy of needs is relevant to nurturing. In the Western cultural tradition, men have been responsible more for providing their children with the foundational needs of food, shelter and safety. Women have traditionally been the initial primary caregivers—a source of love and belonging. Both are types of nurturing. Yet, men have not been considered nurturers until recently (Kimmel, 1996; Harris, 1994).

While empathy and nurturing have been catchwords for good mothering, many men today are primary caretakers for their infants and preschool children (e.g. NHES, 2005). This begs the question of whether or not men have empathy and are nurturing. I suggest that men have had these attributes, just as women do, but that cultural circumstances have pushed display of nurturing into different behaviors. With the help of Greenfield's (2009) theory of Social Change and Human Development, and Inglehart's (1977) Materialist—Postmaterialist theory, it is possible to track sex role changes in nurturing display. Since empathy is a critical precursor to nurturing, consider my discussion of nurturing as also a discussion of empathy.

Snarey's (1993) involvement in a multi-generational study focused on how fathers care for their children. The study began with 240 men from the more poverty-stricken neighborhoods of Boston. Termed the "silent generation" (p. 3), these men were born around The Great Depression when procuring of food and shelter was a struggle. These men witnessed how their own fathers worked long, hard days to provide essentials for the family. When they grew old enough, they, too, contributed to the family economy. Just over a third of this group graduated from high school, matching the national average. While most of this group missed World War II, all but a fourth of them went into military

service and then rode the prosperity wave beginning in the 50s. The most common thread in raising the next generation was that they took pride in knowing that their own children “never wanted for nothing” (p. 7).

The “silent generation” was raised and participated in what Inglehart (1977) would call the materialist mindset—focusing on Maslow’s foundational needs: food, shelter and clothing. They also grew up in their ethnic, subsistence-focused communities, in what Greenfield (2009) would call *gemeinschaft*. For these fathers, nurturing their children meant providing the physical basics to sustain life, and if possible, providing additional material benefits. Snarey reported many of their children acknowledging these material gifts as their fathers’ way of showing love (1993, p. 7).

The next generation, the baby-boomers, mostly graduated from high school and about half went on to college. However, as this generation came of age in the 60s and 70s, it largely rejected the values of their “silent-generation” parents. Tipton describes baby-boomer values such as self-knowledge, strong desire for self-expression, and tolerance for others (1982, pp. 15-16). Erikson, who also studied this group, describes them as “skeptical of authority” and “essentially anti-institutional” (Evans, 1967, p. 861). These lifestyle changes show Greenfield’s shift to *gesellschaft*—the larger and more technically-oriented society in which the children have more school education, grow into more complex and diverse roles, yet are more socially independent (2009, p. 402). The attitude/motivation change also relates to Inglehart’s (1977) Postmaterialists. The baby-boomer generation was thereby primed to seek variations on the status quo of parenting roles.

Hollway specifically addressed the question of whether women are better at caring than men. The ability to care, she states, “depends on the ability to imagine oneself in someone else’s shoes” (2006, p. 124), again, ability to be empathetic and thus nurturing. She discussed “women’s particular position in relation to the care of children [which] have forged capacities to care different from men’s” (2006, p. 122). Women’s head start in empathy and caring are influenced by “social arrangements and socially available positions,” as well as by their prenatal “experiences, birth and breastfeeding” (2006, p. 122). However, she does acknowledge that an infant can instigate “maternal subjectivity” in non-mothers. In other words, Hollway’s description of mother nurturing stems from pragmatic experiences and cultural norms. Acknowledging the possibility of maternal activities in non-mothers opens the door slightly for researchers such as Harris (1994) and Kimmel (1996), who had already begun to recognize nurturing in U.S. masculinity. That is, for “men [who] are gentle, supportive, warm, sensitive, and concerned about others’ feelings,” (Kimmel, 1996, p. 111) to be one of “the dominant themes or ideals underscoring masculinity in the United States” (Kimmel, 1996, p. 104), and thus viable nurturing fathers.

Men still face an uphill battle in showing their aptitude in nurturing infants and young children in the United States and many industrialized cultures. For the U.S., the persistent traditional family stereotype is mother as primary caregiver and father as absent wage earner. This is a deeply engrained mindset, in spite of the vast changes in U.S. families since the 1950s, including increases in divorce and single parenting (Fields & Casper, 2001; ), increases in dual-income and daycare usage (Laughlin, 2010), and



most recently increases in unemployment rates (Census Bureau Reports Families With Children Increasingly Face Unemployment, 2010).

Because the current population of the U.S. consists of older generations who grew up in the prevalent *gemeinschaft* mind-set of the first half of the 1900s, and younger generations who have since grown up with the *gesellschaft* mind-set, a shift in attitudes toward fathers as nurturing primary care-givers should exist.

There are people alive today who were born before women had the right to vote in this country, people who lived through The Depression and World War II. These seniors grew up with a much more strict gender code than they imposed on their children, or than the rules with which grandchildren grew up. I expect a dramatic shift in attitude toward SAHDs between these seniors and the next age group down—people who are in the current parent zone. While this can be construed as both a *Gemeinschaft*—*Gesellschaft* shift and differences in circumstances, significant differences between seniors and young adults who are still in college would show additional evidence of a shift. This is because neither seniors nor students are generally faced with circumstances involving childcare issues. Since the stereotype of nurturing mother in the cliché, “mom, home and apple pie,” evolved in the post World War II era, I think seniors will have different attitudes for at-home moms. This would also be an indication of a *Gemeinschaft*—*Gesellschaft* shift. Therefore, I add these hypothesis:

*H<sub>4</sub>*: People who are over 55 will have a more negative attitude toward Stay-At-Home Dads than any younger group.

*H<sub>5</sub>*: People age 30 to 55 will have the most positive attitudes toward SAHDs.

*H*<sub>6</sub>: There is an attitude shift for Stay-At-Home Moms across age groups.

Additionally, the qualitative interviews of Stay-At-Home Dads offer the opportunity to document empathetic nurturing. Two types of contact are particularly useful in this documentation: skinship and gaze-ship. These acts are important in developing empathy, whether between individuals or between groups, which in turn leads to attachment (Mageo, 2011).

Skinship is a word that the Japanese have borrowed from English (Hendry, 1986, p. 98) and refers to physical contact between caretaker and young child, based on empathy. Contact without empathy or attunement is what Tahhan (2008) calls non-meeting. In Japanese culture, it is common for children to sleep between or near their parents—co-sleeping. At daycare, teachers help young children sleep during naptime by lying down next to them and patting them or rubbing their backs. When Tahhan first practiced this, she followed the movements of the preschool teacher, but was unsuccessful in helping the child to sleep because her goal was to *get* the child to sleep. “I was conscious of our separate bodies, and as long as I attempted to overcome her, there could be no meeting between us” (Tahhan, 2008, p. 48). Skinship actions common in the U.S. can include breast feeding, holding the child in a lap, carrying the child close to the body, and nonverbal communication such as hugs.

Gaze-ship is a term that Mageo (2011) used to describe visual contact between caretaker and child. The child does not necessarily need to return visual contact; it is enough that he or she is aware of being watched over. She explains that gaze-ship in Western culture allows the child to explore autonomously, aiming for the cultural ideal of independence, while still maintaining the caretaker-child connection.

In the U.S. boys and girls learn to relate in different ways, as documented by Chodorow (1974) and Tannen (2001, 1994, 1993). From a neo-Freudian perspective, Chodorow describes gender identity for males as defining themselves in opposition to the foundational relationship with mother, where as females maintain their foundational relationship with mother. From this split in gender identification, a host of different communication goals and strategies develop. A brief example is in Tannen's (2001) video documentation of boys sitting side-by-side, avoiding gaze-ship by engaging in parallel activities, while girls focused on each other.

For the purposes of this study, I observed skinship and gaze-ship behaviors between the Stay-At-Home Dads I interviewed and their children. These observations are the basis of two additional research questions:

*RQ<sub>10</sub>*: How much do Stay-At-Home Dads engage in skinship?

*RQ<sub>11</sub>*: How much do Stay-At-Home Dads engage in gaze-ship?

The primary focus of the literature review thus far has been on the Stay-At-Home Dad role from the perspective of the SAHDs. It is also useful to examine a view of the role as it is portrayed in the mass media, and thus influencing both awareness and attitudes in the culture. The following section discusses this issue.

### *Mass Media and Stay-At-Home Dads*

According to *America's Love Affair with TV* (2010), Americans spend an average of five hours per day watching television. Additionally, by 1991, seven out of ten Americans got most of their news from television (Abramson, 2003). Televisions are also

no longer just for living rooms; 68 percent of people in the U.S. have TVs in their bedrooms, 17 percent have them in their kitchens, three percent have them in their bathrooms and seven percent have them in their garages (*America's Love Affair with TV*, 2010). Movie attendance has also dramatically increased recently—a 17.5 percent increase just between 2007 and 2008 (Cieply & Barnes, 2009). Finally, the Newspaper Association of America (Value of Newspapers, 2007) claims, “While newspaper circulation has gradually eroded, newspapers’ readership continues to be strong and its total audience has expanded with the introduction of a variety of print and digital products.” This suggests a potential for mass media influencing mainstream American attitudes on a myriad of subjects, a prospect that has undergone considerable research. Mainstream is defined by Gerbner et al. as “the broadest dimensions of shared meanings and assumptions... [resulting in] a relative homogenization” (in Bryant & Zillman, 2002, p. 51).

Television in particular has been the focus of socialization studies, owing to its pervasiveness. Gerbner et al. discussed the cultivation effect of television through the “continual repetition of stories that serve to define the world and legitimize a particular social order” (in Bryant & Zillman, 2002, p. 44). A case in point is Morgan (1982), who found that third- and fifth-graders were more likely to stereotype gender role activities with increased television viewing.

While the effects of watching television are “subtle, complex, and intermingled with other influences” (Gerbner et al. in Bryant & Zillman, 2002, pp. 48-9), the amount of television watching is a significant factor. According to Shrum (2001), the visuals presented on TV become easily accessed (recalled) images, especially for heavy viewers,

when making heuristic judgments. As mentioned above, heuristic reactions refer to shortcut, often emotion-laden, processing. It involves quick “gut” reactions, such as women in parks with their children on weekdays thinking that men who are also there at that time are stalkers. Heuristic processing has been useful for survival in our evolutionary distant past, but now with the advent and pervasiveness of mass media, this process often results in inaccurate altered perceptions. It is the alternative route to systematic processing, in which sources are more scrutinized.

Heuristic reactions are not the same as “thin-slicing,” or quick judgments made by experts within their field of study (Gladwell, 2005). Thin-slicing is the result of considerable emersion into a topic, and judgments are often based on experience so assimilated that the expert cannot always articulate the reasons for a certain judgment. That is, the information has become part of the practical dimension of human consciousness (Giddens, 1979; May & Mumby, 2005). Gladwell gave the example of a statue that the Getty Museum considered purchasing. It passed several quantifiable tests, indicating it was as old as it should be, but several experts doubted its origins. While these experts could not immediately articulate their reasoning process, they later talked of the condition of the statue being too good for its supposed age, and the style of the sculpture was too mixed to have come from the claimed location. The statue was finally proven a fraud, having sat in potato peelings for several months to “age” the marble.

Heuristic reactions, on the other hand, involve using only a subset of relevant information—that which can most easily be retrieved from memory. Television provides easily retrieved visuals, especially of violent events that the individual may not have ever experienced. In heuristic processing, the individual is often neither motivated nor able to

discount or scrutinize these television memories (see Elaboration Likelihood Model, Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Numerous studies point to television affecting people's social judgment as a result of this availability heuristic (e.g. Tversky & Kahneman, 1973, 1974; Manis, Shedler, Jonides & Nelson, 1993). Additional findings by Fujioka (1999) show that when direct knowledge is limited, individuals rely on portrayals in the media, which are often stereotypes. Because Stay-At-Home Dads are a token population, direct knowledge may be scarce, and thus media portrayals may become the primary source of information about them. The stereotype here is that SAHDs are White and middle- or upper-middleclass (Vavrus, 2002).

According to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), values and behaviors can be learned vicariously, simply by watching interactions, such as on television. When these portrayed behaviors reflect that of the viewer, the values and behaviors are reaffirming and feed self-esteem (Cognitive-Functional Theory: Tan, Nelson, Dong and Tan, 1997). This may transcend the amount of television an individual watches (Tan, Nelson, Dong and Tan, 1997). Individuals who have viewed interviews of Stay-At-Home Dads, then, may make social judgments about them according to how the talk show hosts or reporters respond to the SAHDs. This can be either positive or negative. Interviews in which the host was curious and enthusiastic may show that this is a functional method for raising children. However, when the host later talks to a co-host, saying, "Wow! I couldn't do that," the portrayal could appear negative.

Further studies suggest that television content accepted as real (e.g. Busselle, 2001) or believable (Gibbons, Lukowski & Walker, 2005) is more likely to produce availability heuristic processing and thus affect social judgments. Real is operationally

defined as “the level in which audiences perceive fictional stories to be ‘true to life’” (Tan et al., 2010). Believability is operationally defined as “the level in which audiences believe news stories are ‘true’” (Tan et al., 2010).

Newspapers and newswire services have published hundreds of articles about and from Stay-At-Home Dads. Of the 321 separate articles (published 1989 to 2008) that I reviewed, SAHD resources were sometimes repeated, but very few SAHDs were in repeat interviews. These articles were primarily exploratory in nature, uncovering this extreme reversal of male roles. They almost always depicted SAHDs in a positive light, although many also talked about the hazards of the at-home job, such as isolation and trouble re-entering the workforce.

Vavrus (2002), however, did a search of SAHD interviews in television news over a five year period in the 1990s, finding coverage repeatedly focused on the same three SAHDs. These three men were White; their wives had professional jobs that kept the family in upper middleclass standing. Experts commented on possible social and familial effects of men caregivers, mostly anticipating that children would not be “damaged” in some way (Vavrus, 2002, p. 358) and that women appreciate the *help* at home (Vavrus, 2002, p. 359). These experts seemed to consider women still in charge of the domestic realm.

In this study, I will explore realism/believability ratings of SAHD reports in the media. If the media is generating stereotypes, does meeting SAHDs dispel them? Sex and age of respondents may be factors in hearing about SAHDs in the media, realism/believability ratings of the media, as well as in meeting SAHDs. Professional women may benefit the most from a SAHD arrangement, making them more aware of

SAHDs and more inclined to meet them. Childcare is a pressing topic for respondents who are in the current parent zone, therefore those who are age 30 to 55 may be the age group most interested in hearing about and meeting SAHDs.

*H<sub>7A</sub>*: Hearing about SAHDs improves impressions of them.

*H<sub>7B</sub>*: Women have heard about SAHDs more than men.

*H<sub>7C</sub>*: Respondents in the current parent zone, age 30 to 55, have heard about SAHDs more than any other age group.

*H<sub>8A</sub>*: Positive realism/believability ratings of SAHD media will positively correlate with more frequent exposure to hearing about SAHDs in that media.

*H<sub>8B</sub>*: Female have more positive realism/believability ratings for media about SAHDs than males.

*H<sub>8C</sub>*: Respondents in the current parent zone, age 30 to 55, have more positive realism/believability ratings for media about SAHDs than any other age group.

*H<sub>9A</sub>*: Meeting SAHDs improves perceptions of SAHDs.

*H<sub>9B</sub>*: Women meet SAHDs more than men.

*H<sub>9C</sub>*: As the current parent zone, respondents aged 30 to 55 meet more SAHDs than any other age groups.



## METHODS

To test my research questions and hypotheses on Stay-At-Home Dads, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods. This also reflects my use Structuration Theory as my overall model, since I am interested in the individual's view as well as that of society.

### *Qualitative Methods*

#### *Data Collection*

Life history interviews were conducted with 12 Stay-At-Home Dads, one of which was a former SAHD. All but one of the SAHDs live in the greater Inland Northwest area of the United States. This additional SAHD lives in Michigan heard about my study through a mutual friend. This interview was done by phone, because we had a technical problem with Skype (a computer program that allows both audio and visual to both parties communicating). The other interviews were done at SAHDs' homes. SAHDs were asked to devise their own pseudonyms, hence some of the responses have unusual names. The interviewees volunteered in response to a request posted on an At-Home Dad website, and by snowball method. I offered a chance to win a \$50 restaurant certificate to motivate participation.

An additional qualitative component of my study was to observe some of the Stay-At-Home Dads with their children. Aside from the former SAHD and the Michigan SAHD, neither of whom I could observe with their children, several of the local SAHDs viewed the interview time as a break from parenting. They made other arrangements for their children, so I was not able to observe their interactions. The purpose of the

observations was to explore the gaze-ship and skinship aspects of SAHD nurturing. Overall, I was able to observe six SAHDs with their children.

### *Data Analysis*

Through the life-history interviews of Stay-At-Home Dads, I described “the essence of a lived phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 78) as well as use the constant comparison method of Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Stay-At-Home Dad support groups are informal and rather loosely coupled organizations, thus presenting the question of whether or not they are culture-sharing groups. However, to the extent possible, I used some ethnographic methods and analysis. Each of these qualitative methods cover a shift in perspective, and more importantly, offer a crosscheck for validity (Creswell, 2007).

To measure gaze-ship, I counted each time a father looked at his child and then roughly measured the time length of gaze by silently counting the seconds (1001, 1002, etc.). Skinship episodes tended to last longer. Short connections, such as picking up a toddler and redirecting her attention, I labeled as “cruising” (C). Longer episodes were primarily lap time, and I labeled them as such (LT).

Finally, I compared these interviews to phone interviews I did in 2006 for a paper I later presented at NCA (National Communication Association) in Boston. The focus for that study was how SAHDs communicated their role to others, and many of the questions I used from that interview are also in this interview. Respondents for the 2006 interviews were garnered in the same manner as for the current interviews. However, because I was doing phone interviews, I could talk to SAHDs farther away from my location. I was able

to interview SAHDs in California, Texas, Michigan and Washington State. Of those eleven interviews, two were former SAHDs.

### *Quantitative Methods*

The Quantitative component consists of a general population survey. The purpose of the survey was to garner a sampling of opinions about Stay-At-Home Dads in U.S. culture.

#### *Survey Construction*

I used semantic differential responses to 14 opposing word pairs (employable—not employable, hardworking—lazy, etc.) to describe Stay-At-Home Dads. The adjectives that were built into the opposing word pairs came from two sources. One source was descriptors found in 321 newspaper articles by SAHDs and about SAHDs that I previously read and analyzed. The other source was from a pre-test, in which students in a large lecture communication class of nearly 60 students in an Inland Northwest University were asked to write five descriptive adjectives of their own choosing for the term Stay-At-Home Dad. The most common positive attributes were hard working, friendly, loving and responsible. The highest occurring negative descriptors were insecure, weak (“wuss, pushover”), and over-weight. Subjects were asked to respond to the same word pairs in terms of Stay-At-Home Moms, and then for Stay-At-Home Dads. This offered a chance to compare responses between a traditional structure in society to the newer nontraditional trend.

As an additional part of the survey, I asked subjects if they had heard of SAHDS before, to rate the realism/believability of various media formats in which they heard of SAHDS, and whether they had met and SAHDS. The realism and believability scales were modeled after the Media Use and Values in Korea study (Tan, et al. 2010), and were based on the media studies concerning perceptions of reality of media sources (e.g. Busselle, 2001) and believable of medial sources (e.g. Gibbons, Lukowski & Walker, 2005).

An additional pretest (n = 74) was conducted by giving the survey to three speech communication classes (a required general education class), one at a research university, one at a regional university, and one at a community college—all in the Inland Northwest. The general education classes were chosen, because they would garner people with varied career goals and interests. Some of the instructions were modified for clarity on the final study, as a result of this pretest. After each semantic differential section, respondents were asked to pick five words from these descriptors that they felt were most salient for SAHDS and for SAHMs. In the pretest, some respondents were choosing their own adjectives (e.g. smoker), instead of from the list. Aside from this correction, the pretest and final study aligned with each other in terms of results.

### *Data Collection*

Surveys (n=608) were collected through introductory speech communication classes at three universities and two community colleges in the Inland Northwest, at a senior center, through a national professional organization, and through the snowball sampling method. I offered a chance to win a \$100 Amazon gift certificate to people who

responded to the survey and/or garnered others to do so. Because of this tactic, about 150 of the respondents live outside the Inland Northwest.

The survey was disseminated via hardcopy handed out in person and as digital copies by email. To maintain the integrity of the survey design, the surveys sent by email were in the form of a Word document attached to the email and also copied into the message text box. This allowed people to choose between formats, since some of them may not have the correct program to open the attached document. Online survey programs, such as Survey Monkey, could not be used, because they did not allow for responses to semantic differentials (happy—sad). I would have had to create a set of responses for each term (happy, sad), that would not have integrated with the measurements of the hardcopy version.

### *Respondents*

Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 93, with a mean of 29.26. About a third, 38.4 percent, were male. Close to two-thirds were female, 61.4 percent. One person did not answer the age demographic question. Income categories were modeled after Census Bureau categories: (1) Under \$10,000; (2) \$10,000 to \$14,999; (3) \$15,000 to \$19,999; (4) \$20,000 to \$24,999; (5) \$25,000 to \$29,999; (6) \$30,000 to \$39,999; (7) \$40,000 to \$49,999; (8) \$50,000 to \$74,999; (9) \$75,000 to \$99,999; and (10) \$100,000 and over. Respondents fell into all categories, with the mean category (6) \$30,000 to \$39,999. Seventeen respondents did not answer this income demographic question. Respondents were predominantly white, comprising 493 of the 608. The next largest category was

Asian, with 42 respondents. There were 29 respondents of Hispanic origin, 12 Black, and 21 in the “other” category. Eleven respondents did not answer this demographic question.

Four surveys were rejected because people returned them blank or barely started. These people were from the Senior Center group, and three left notes explaining that they had not heard of Stay-At-Home Dads, nor could they imagine them. Six of the online surveys that were part of the snowball data collection sent to males, were completed and returned with notes saying that they had their wives fill out the survey instead. Two of these specifically stated that their wives “take care of family stuff.”

### *Data Analysis*

Respondents were grouped by age categories Group 1 = 18 to 22 (students), Group 2 = 23 to 29 (starters), Group 3 = 30 to 55 (current parent zone), and Group 4 = 56 to 93 (seniors). I also explored results by respondents’ self-reported income range: (1) Under \$10,000 to \$14,999; (2) \$15,000 to \$24,999; (3) \$25,000 to \$39,999; (4) \$40,000 to \$74,999 and; (5) \$75,000 and over. These are the ten U.S. Census Bureau income categories, but collapsed into five categories to reduce the number of comparative *t*-tests performed. Additional respondent demographics explored were sex (male, female), heard about SAHDs (yes, no), and met SAHDs (yes, no).

Factor analysis was performed on the complete list of 14 word dyads (individual variables) for both SAHDs and SAHMs. The grand means of the resulting eigenvalue-determined components were compared using ANOVA: Emotion SAHD by Emotion SAHM, and Economic SAHD by Economic SAHM. Additionally, the individual

variables were compared between SAHDs and SAHMs using ANOVA for more in-depth information.

Six descriptors were of particular interest. The variable Nurturing is a key term in parenting literature and one that has been held in question for males. Economic choice was another important term, because the U.S. economy is in an economic downturn. If respondents think men are choosing to stay home with their children more because of economic considerations, then the SAHD trend may be considered more of a temporary response to those conditions. Nurturing and four additional variables (hardworking, competent, kind and friendly) had the largest tallies from the survey sections in which respondents picked five words from the word pair semantic differential pages that they felt best described SAHMs and SAHDs. The same five terms were most salient for both SAHDs and SAHMS, though they were in different order by frequencies. This information is presented in the table below:

<i>Table 2: Frequencies of top five responder-selected descriptors</i>			
<i>Stay-At-Home Moms</i>		<i>Stay-At-Home Dads</i>	
Descriptor	Tally	Descriptor	Tally
Nurturing	473	Hardworking	294
Hardworking	443	Kind	253
Kind	352	Friendly	250
Friendly	288	Nurturing	244
Competent	220	Competent	191

*T*-tests were used to compare each of the demographics of respondents to responses for the 14 variables for both SAHDs and SAHMs. *T*-tests were also used to compare each of the demographics of respondents to realism/believability ratings of various media in which they heard about SAHDs. Pearson *r* correlations were used to

compare respondent realism/believability ratings of various media in which they heard about SAHDs, to exposure frequency of hearing about SAHDs.



## QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS: SAHD INTERVIEWS

### *Demographics*

As part of the life-history interviews, I looked for background points in common among the SAHDs in this group. Only the most basic demographics are shared by these SAHDs.

There was one ubiquitous commonality with the SAHDs in my interview group (*RQ<sub>2</sub>*). All of the SAHDs I interviewed are Caucasian. This aligns with the U.S. Census Bureau information and the Varvus (2000) study.

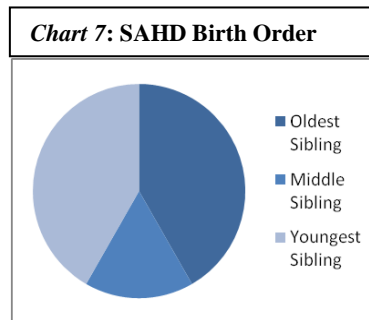
Interestingly, several SAHDs talked of being at an age when they could accept the role of Stay-At-Home Dad. Having had time in the workforce and being past their 20s seem to be key in taking on the role.

Daffy (He chose Daffy Duck as his pseudonym.) talked about people choosing to have children later in life. “People we know, we’re all 29 or 30 when we had our first kid... One thing I noticed about [the local at-home dad playgroup] was a lot of guys there that looked old to have a six-year-old.”

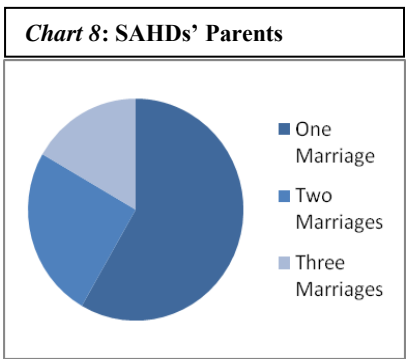
Rick discussed this issue as having the need to prove himself in the workplace first:

I wouldn’t have been an at-home dad at 25. I was comfortable doing it because I thought like, at that point in my career, I proved to myself that I could be successful in that field, and, um, working more wasn’t going to deal a lot more rewards in getting the next promotion... I think that I had to be over 30, personally, to make that sort of decision.

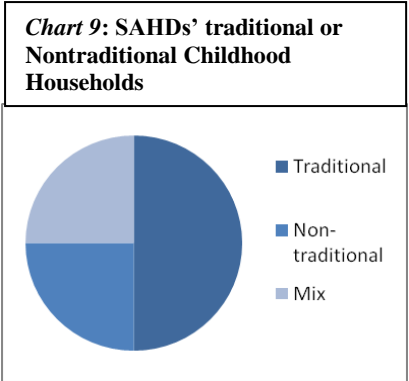
Of the childhood and family background information that I collected, nothing stood out as a group identifier. Nothing in their collective backgrounds could be pinpointed as a predictor or predisposition for other men to take on this role.



In terms of birth order, five were in the position of oldest, two were middle children, and five were youngest children. One was a functional only child until he was in eighth grade, because his parents divorced and he lived with his mother and her extensive family. After eighth grade, he lived with his father, where he became the oldest of six. The most common number of siblings (including half- and step-siblings) was one, though six SAHDs had more than one sibling. One SAHD said he thought he was more oriented toward “babies, puppies, and the softer things in life” because he had three older sisters. Another SAHD thought he eased into the role because he had been raised almost exclusively by his mother, and had considerable responsibility in watching his younger brother. Two SAHDs said they were not close to their siblings and their parents did not ask any one child in the family to look after the others. These SAHDs talked of not holding a baby until they cared for their own children.

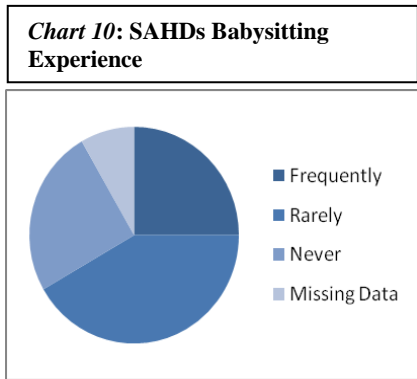


Seven SAHDs grew up in households in which their parents stayed married. Three SAHDs lived through childhoods with divorced-remarried parents. For two SAHDs, their birth parents were into their third marriages before they were grown. The father of one SAHD died in a plane crash shortly before he was born, so he only knew his stepfather. One SAHD was adopted. Three SAHDs reported one or both parents were alcoholics. One reported a parent that may have been bipolar.

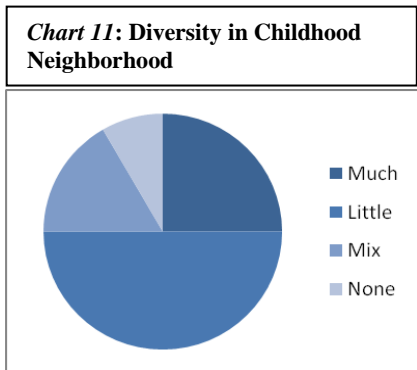


Six SAHDs grew up in traditional households. I labeled traditional as the father worked for pay while the mother may have volunteered in the community or worked part time, but was primarily a Stay-At-Home Mom. In these households, the mother primarily did housework and the father primarily did yard work. Six SAHDs grew up in this

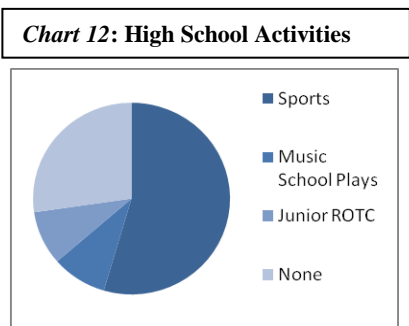
structure. Three SAHDs grew up in non-traditional households, which I defined as both mother and father working, though household and yard chores were divided in various ways. An additional three SAHDs grew up in a mixture of households, owing to living with one divorced parent and then the other.



I explored their babysitting experiences, because I thought that those who had experience taking care of children would be more comfortable taking on the at-home dad role. My working definition of babysitting included both work for pay and taking care of siblings. Three SAHDs had done a lot of babysitting, five had done a little, and three had never done any.



I also asked about travel and diversity, to explore whether exposure to other types of lifestyles influenced their decision to take on a counter-cultural role. Six of the SAHDs in my group grew up in areas with very little diversity. One grew up in such a well-to-do area that he was in high school before he even had the opportunity to meet and talk to a Black person. Three SAHDs grew up in areas where there was considerable diversity, and two more were exposed to a mix of diversity levels, according to which parent housed them. Most of the SAHDs traveled regionally to visit extended family or in the U.S. on family trips. Three SAHDs had traveled to other countries. Travel opportunities overall increased slightly once they were grown up.



Half of the SAHDs in my group participated in high school sports, one participated in music/school plays, and yet another was a member of junior ROTC. One raced bicycles, a non-school sport. No one participated in other clubs or student government. Overall, no one talked of being interested in being popular at school, though two talked of being the “class clown” and one was elected to the Valentine court senior year. Two considered themselves very introverted. One called himself a “geek” with geek friends.

As adults, this group of SAHDs range in age from 31 to 49, with an average age of 37.6. When their first child was born, their ages ranged from 27 to 40, with an average age of 33.6. Their current family income range is \$10,000-14,999 to \$100,000 or more, with an average of \$50,000-74,999. The level of education each has achieved also has a wide range, from high school graduate to Ph.D. The average is high school plus about two years of college or professional program. One had two Bachelor's degrees. As of the time of interview, the range of time each had spent as a SAHD was six months to 10 years. The average was 3.6 years. (See Appendix A)

### *Subjective Well-Being*

#### *Positive Affect and Satisfaction*

Stay-At-Home-Dads' ability to establish, or re-establish, Subjective Well-Being in their counter-culture role is a corner-stone concern in investigating sustainability of this trend. Diener mapped Subjective Well-Being as an individual self-evaluation based on four components: Life satisfaction, satisfaction with important domains, positive affect, and low levels of negative affect" (2000, p. 34).

The positive aspects of Diener's Subjective Well-Being are life satisfaction, satisfaction with important domains, and positive affect (2000, p. 34). Important indicators for these components include taking on the role of SAHD by choice more than because of economics, enjoying the role as an identity domain, enjoying their children, plans to continue the role or adapt future paid work around this role, and whether they would recommend this role to other men.

For SAHDs, satisfaction with their new role as their primary domain begins with their attitude about the role as they enter it. Therefore, I asked SAHDs what circumstances led to them taking on this role. I wanted to know whether they took on this role by choice, or because of more economic circumstances (*RQ<sub>3</sub>*).

Three interviewees talked about economics as a primary reason. Two of these dads had twins, thus doubling all of the expenses of daycare possibilities. All three of these dads decided to become primary care dads after doing the math of comparing their financial input to daycare financial out-put. Both dads with twins had wives in professional careers (one a lawyer and the other a doctor), who brought in an income that could easily sustain a family comfortably in the Inland Northwest United States. This income far exceeded what each of the dads earned. Both of these dads had been working since graduating from high school, had worked at different jobs in the locations that their wives' careers had taken them, and they were not attached to any particular type of work that they had been doing before having kids. The third SAHD, who talked about economics as a primary vehicle into the SAHD role, left a 50-to-60 hour per week job as a website and graphics designer, but was unable to find a full-time job when he moved to the local area. Anything less than full time was futile, because of how much childcare would cost. His wife had been laid off at their former location, and she also wanted to move to this area to be near her parents. While she has been able to find work, he talked of their financial struggles.

Six of the SAHDs I interviewed mixed economics and preferences almost in the same breath. As Bob so enthusiastically put it, "Basically, it came down to economics first, and my willingness—my extreme willingness—I wanted to do this." These SAHDs

talked of how they and their wives felt it was important to have one or the other parent at home with the kids. John 153 (He chose a Bible reference for his pseudonym.) said, “We didn’t want to ship the kids out to spend all day with someone else, and pay for it.”

Captain (used to sail yachts for those wealthy enough to own one) further expressed the feeling of deep-seated responsibility to the next generation: “To me it just feels like the natural thing to do—if you are going to have a child—to put all of your energy into it.”

These SAHDs did not want their children raised by strangers. The primary difference between this group and the economic-reason SAHDs is that individuals in this group were either looking for a job/career change, or were willing to do so because of a deep-seated interest or feeling of obligation to their prospective or newborn children. A tertiary reason that this group cited as the reason why they became the at-home parent was their disposition versus their wives’ disposition.

For example, John 153’s wife originally had a better paying job, and so he took on the role of SAHD while he was in graduate school. However, for a section of time, they were able to piece their work for pay so that they took turns with the childcare. “But she was home more than she ever had been,” John 153 added, “I think she just doesn’t really like it that much, and realized that, ‘OK, this isn’t really what I want to do.’”

One respondent was a former SAHD from the 60s. His two sons are now grown with families of their own. Bill was 25 when he took on the role of primary parent for six months, caring for an infant and preschooler. He had just quit a job that had excessive over-time, and his wife wanted to get back to work. This generally follows John 153 and his wife.



Jake landed in the role, more because of his wife's circumstances than her disposition. She was finishing her medical residency on the East Coast when their first son was born, and she needed to complete this assignment at the end of her long educational experience to finally reach her goal. Jake worked in a near-by town, but owing to traffic, did not get home until 7-7:30 in the evening. With long waiting lists at premium daycare facilities, they had to put their son in a daycare they came to consider insufficient:

You go there and pick him up, and there would be kids on the floor, crying, and the ladies sitting around, you know, like, you didn't want your kids there. You can't tell how long he's been crying, or if anyone has been seeing to him. And you pick him up, and you don't know him and he doesn't know you. It wasn't the best situation there.

By the time their son was four months old, Jake had quit his job and become a Stay-At-Home Dad. When his wife finished her residency and they moved to the Inland Northwest, they had a second son. Jake takes care of both the six-week-old and the 22-month-old. In this case, Jake's circumstances were more flexible than his wife's circumstances. He has opted to continue in the role.

One of the SAHDs in the interview group did not exactly fit into any of these groupings. Dan took on the role of primary parent because he had not been working for a while due to medical issues with his back. He and his wife adopted a one-year-old, and their adoption advisor suggested that one of them be at home with him to help with the bonding process.

I also wanted to know if these SAHDs planned to continue their role in some form, long term (*RQ4*). Four of the SAHDs have reached what Jason liked to call a “sustainable system.” These dads have wives in professional careers that bring in a comfortable living in relation to the local economy. Three of them also have part-time occupations that work around the children. Jason, for example, is in the Reserves and has been able to find a position in each of the locations they have been transferred with his wife’s military career. Bob used to work in the news media and then had his own photography and videography business. He still does occasional video and photography work, but mostly uses his skills in making mock newscasts with his 11-month old daughter as anchor doing her baby-babble. “She is so mellow and fun,” he said, “Good all the time is good.” Daffy works partial night shifts and fills his days with his twin preschooler sons and two-year-old daughter. Brad, who also has twin boys, is planning to finish college when the kids are more settled. He wants to be a self-employed craftsman so that he can work around his kids’ schedules.

Five SAHDs have enjoyed their experiences as the primary caretaker of their children, but they feel some drawbacks. For Kinjiru (Avatar pseudonym) and Captain, family finances are a struggle. They feel a need to contribute more financially to the family, even though one freelances and the latter does full-time childcare for two children. John 153 is in a comfortable income bracket for the area’s economy, but after 10 years of primarily being a SAHD, he would like to earn some income as well as his wife. Even when finances are not a concern, some of the men want to return to careers they truly enjoyed. Jim captured the internal dissonance of these dads: “I don’t always

want to be known as a Stay-At-Home Dad. I'm proud of having done it, but it's time to move on."

For the former SAHD that I interviewed, isolation in the 60s was severe: "After six months, I was looking out the window and watching the garbage man. I felt isolated... You're not really a participant in life, you see it go by the window." Dan, a current SAHD who has been home with his adopted son for six months, is also struggling with the role: "I could never, ever consider myself a Stay-At-Home Dad, you know, a blue collar worker and everything else." For Dan, not being able to participate in his regular activities is stifling. He looks forward to the end of potty training when he can put his son in the daycare he and his wife have chosen.

SAHDs have made their primary domain caring for their children. Thus, it is important to know whether they feel a sense of satisfaction about this counter-cultural decision.

Ten of the twelve SAHDs I interviewed talked of the wonders of seeing their kids develop and having time to play with them (*RQ5*). Jason talked of enjoying watching his sons explore everything for the first time. Rick reminisced about his six-year-old and of the one fleeting chance parents have to see their kids grow up. Jake spoke of forging bonds with his kids, and how he smiles more than when he was at paid work. Kinjiru excitedly talked about getting his 11-year-old child interested in reading adult-level books. Captain said caring for a child was the "coolest thing in the world."

Bill, the former SAHD, did not get to see many changes in his short tenure in this role. In the long run, he does not think that he has bonded better with his sons because of

the experience—though he felt it did make a difference at the time. However, he now enjoys sharing stories and comparing childcare notes with his daughter-in-law.

At six months into his sojourn, Dan may be still in the transition period. There are parts of his role that he enjoys, and parts that he finds utterly frustrating. Mostly, he resists the changes in his lifestyle that come with having a child.

SAHD remarks about having time to interact with their children make up the one nearly universal “positive affect.” Some felt a sense of life satisfaction from this “positive affect,” specifically satisfaction with care-giving as their primary role. These are the ones mentioned above who felt they had a sustainable system. For the five SAHDs who felt drawbacks, they felt satisfaction with the role, but not life satisfaction. These are the men like Jim, who are ready to move back into the work-for-pay realm full time.

All other benefits mentioned by this interview group were presented as humor. For example, “I love being able to work in my pajamas.” was a common comment.

Additionally, Nine of the SAHDs I interviewed spoke of transitioning into this identity, of becoming comfortable with it and of coming to own the role as their identity. They also talked of a simultaneous growing disassociation with their job identities. Interestingly, this includes the SAHDs who talked about wanting to return to work.

Jake’s view is representative of those SAHDs who are financially comfortable. He said he would rather have the memories of seeing his son grow up than have some monetary gain. His wife is a doctor, and if he was working, taxes would be incrementally much higher. “There’s no benefit of working other than the socialization you get from being out of the house,” he concluded, “That I’ve been financially able to do it is key.”

Even though Rick maintains connections with his career through volunteer work, and hopes eventually to find a job, he also talked of identifying with his SAHD role. He talked of moving his energies away from work toward optimizing the household. While he would like to find full-time work, he is not interested in the over-time he used to put into his job.

For those SAHDs who are struggling with finances, the rewards of watching their children develop does not seem to be enough justification for being an at-home parent. Both Kinjiru and Captain additionally talked of responsibility to the next generation as a key motivator. This may also be a face-saving reason.

John 153, is one SAHD in my group who struggles with identity. Over the past 10 years, he and his wife have utilized different parenting scenarios. He has enjoyed his spurts of working full time, and even brought his first child to work for a while. Unfortunately, his boss reconstructed John 153's job so that he could no longer do so, and with three children, now, he does not see that as possible. He struggles with his participation in various in-groups:

I think that the hardest thing has been to develop that self identity of, "Who am I?" In the middle of that and trying to bring in some money, trying to develop something that you can do. Obviously, the financial issues play a huge part in it, especially as a male... It's circumstances that have dictated it [being a SAHD], so the identity isn't as locked in at times.

As an additional angle to look at identity connections, I asked these SAHDs whether they would recommend taking on the at-home parent role to other men. Seven unequivocally said they would. Kinjiru's response is exemplar of these SAHDs, "I would

say, taking care of children is more rewarding than any kind of job you could ever possibly have.” Four SAHDs said the situation works for them, but provisionally added that couples should first do a budget, as well as have the men consider their personal ties to career and advancement possibilities. Rick, gave a typical response for this group, “I think I would still very heartily recommend it, because you can only do it once.” He talked here of how fleetingly quick childhood passes. One SAHD, Dan, said he would caution other men to reconsider, because it is such a hard, confining job.

Whether “positive affect” and satisfaction is sufficient to overcome “negative affect” is a key component. In the next section I address the “negative affect” issues of being a SAHD.

### *Negative Affect*

I have already presented a number of theories that suggest Stay-At-Home Dads could have high levels of “negative affect.” These issues can manifest as feeling isolated due to tokenism, being the brunt of negative stereotyping, or even being incorrectly categorized in a negative way (such as being mistaken as stalkers in parks). Additionally, SAHDs may partake in their own subordination by choosing to stay isolated.

As I interviewed this group of SAHDs, I realized that there are two main sources of isolation for SAHDs in our society: the general isolation that comes from caring for a young child, especially an infant, and the isolation due to tokenism (*RQ<sub>6</sub>*). Both types of isolation came up during interviews.

Isolation came up frequently in accounts of the initial transition of leaving a job to care for a child, especially an infant. Jim described the most common type of isolation

that all but one of my interviewees mentioned. This type of isolation is one that Stay-At-Home Moms can succumb to as well. According to Jim:

At the beginning it was really, really... hard at first, you know. Now that that kids are older you can talk to them and play with them a little, but it was not at all. And I didn't know anybody up here at the beginning... It's kind of hard to get together with people who are working and all that. At the time I didn't know any other SAHDs, which was sort of bad. And my first kid was 7-8 months old, something like that. And then, my wife's job didn't get her home until 6:30-6:45. It's just the last couple of hours in the afternoon that were extra hard sometimes. And it was hard to cook a meal every night and all that kind of stuff. It took a lot of adjustment. That gradually got better. I got better at those things, and I got better at finding projects to do around the house.

Bob gave more information about how he made the adjustment into his SAHD role. With a television media background, he had his own business as a photographer and videographer. "I referred to the job for a long time," he said. "That's getting less and less—less focus there. Bob currently incorporates what he knows from his former work, which he loved, to capturing moments of his daughter's development with such things as toddler newscasts. He has friends in the media business who wrote a theme song for the newscasts and help with the props. It is a fun activity that bonds Bob to an in-group and provides a continuance of the things he likes to do. He no longer feels isolated.

The one SAHD who did not mention this type of changeover isolation problem was Jason, who was busy transitioning to part-time military Reservist work within the same squadron. He kept working with everyone he knew, seeing them once a week.

Eight of the SAHDs I interviewed referred to a long-term feeling of isolation, owing to being a token minority (*RQ6*). Rick, who recently initiated the local At-Home Dad group talked of not wanting to join another *Mommy and Me Gymboree* group where he was the only dad. John 153 talked about realizing that he does not fit in with Stay-At-Home Moms. He and Dan both talked of none of the women in the parenting groups wanting to talk sports instead of recipes or women's personal issues. John 153 has a Ph.D. in sports history and management, and does some coaching on a volunteer basis. Like Daffy, he feels uncomfortable talking with women to get play dates for his kids. Both said they feel as if they would be "hitting on them" [giving unwanted sexual attention].

Three of the SAHDs that I interviewed said they do not feel this type of isolation. These dads are like people who know multiple languages that can easily code-switch from one language to another. Jason is a prime example of being able to switch from talking about home matters (the sleeping habits of his six-week-old son and unpacking the household goods at the new assignment), to work matters (office objectives, new regulations, etc.). Captain and Kinjiru are both active in the community and can switch to a myriad of topics. These SAHDs have identities with multiple groups, male and female, and can effortlessly switch from one in-group discussion to another. People can quickly find some frame in which to picture these SAHDs and then the conversation can progress comfortably into points in common.

All but one of the SAHDs I interviewed made the decision to become the primary care parent strictly through discussions with their wives about their personal circumstances. This seems to be the common way that men enter the primary childcare



role—no checking for information from couples that already operate with the SAHD arrangement. This includes Dan, because he took on the role after he and his wife discussed options. The adoption counselor only suggested that one of them stay home to bond with their son.

Two of the SAHDs in my group had met other SAHDs before they took on the role themselves. Bob explained why he didn't garner any information from the SAHDs he met before taking on the role himself:

When we had the baby shower there were two other SAHDS whose wives worked with mine that came. They talked to me about it—their kids are much older. So, I said 'No' just because I didn't really relate to where they were, especially in the process of her just being pregnant. I didn't relate to being a dad at all... and they let it be known to me that I could talk to them about it. And, ah, maybe I should call them some time.

Brad, however, met two separate individuals who were SAHDs before he took on the role himself. Even though one of these SAHDs went back to work after four or five years, Brad was able to garner valuable information.

As SAHDs, most of these men stayed independent of their new identity in-group. John 153, who has been a SAHD on and off for ten years, had been in a *Daddy and Me Gymboree* class at Penn State, but he had not sought out any SAHDs when he moved to the Inland Northwest. Rick did not want to join another mothers group, but only started the local SAHD group after numerous suggestions to do so from his wife. Six of the SAHD's in my interview group joined this At-Home Dads group, but only when their wives and/or mothers-in law saw the article in the regional paper about the group starting

up. They encouraged the SAHDs in their lives to “check it out.” Kinjiru, on the other hand, is not a member of the group and says he feels no need to join one. He is comfortable with the friends he and his wife have, and says he feels no need to reach out to other SAHDs. Jason found the group on his own. At the time of my interview with him, he had lived in the area only four months. However, as a veteran of frequent moves with the military, he is savvy at finding in-groups quickly. Captain lives 70 miles away, and therefore does not belong to this group. Of the SAHDs I interviewed who are members of the local At-Home Dads group, it was primarily the women in their lives—wives, mothers-in-law, etc.—who encouraged them make the initial connection.

Yet, after joining the At-Home Dads group, all but one had positive things to say. The group is based on play-dates for their kids. However, as Bob put it:

I’ve met some really cool people. It’s been more about me meeting people than her [his daughter]. Although, there’s a girl and a boy coming right behind her in age that I think that in the future might be cool.

Jake is the only one who said he found the at-home dads group uncomfortable: I’ve been to a couple of events and it’s kind of awkward. It’s kind of like social dating almost. I mean you get to the park and there are 10 men standing around with their children.

He prefers the structure of activities provided at child-parent gym classes. Jake talked of how his son’s face lights up when he sings the songs from gym, and how his son strives to sing along.

Brad was one of several dads who expressed surprise in discovering so many SAHDs in the area after joining the group. In general, they seem to view themselves as

more of a minority than they actually are, because they have had so little connection with members of their in-group. John 153 commented that, on a daily basis he does not see any other dads: “Yeah, you wouldn’t even know that anybody else was out there.”

Kinjiru said he did not know of any other SAHDs, though his wife, who joined us for a while, pointed out that there are at least two others living in their apartment complex.

Aside from isolation, negative stereotyping has been a considerable “negative affect” in the past (e.g. Eveld, 2003; Warren 2002; Stewart, 2001; Mawhorr, 2000). I asked about negative stereotyping, and whether it came from family, friends or strangers (*RQ7*).

Three SAHDs from my group did not recall being subject to negative stereotyping at all, in terms of responses from others around them. Dan is in cognitive dissonance about labeling himself as an at-home dad. He is focused on getting through the adoption process and not aware of any negative responses about being at home. Kinjiru and Captain are both active in their community circles, where they are accepted.

Some negative stereotyping that SAHDs reported are more benign—something that the SAHDs do not have to deal with on a regular basis, or that no longer phases them. Jim’s in-laws are Malaysian, he and his family travel overseas to visit them every couple of years. He is conscious of his in-laws more traditional lifestyle and gets “a little more wary of telling people what [he] does” when he goes there. Bob and Jason reported that they commonly get a surprise reaction from strangers. A number of co-workers have pointed Jason toward job openings in their non-reservist workplaces. Their frame of him is that he lost his job in the economic downturn. Some do not know what to make of it when he tells them he chose to be a SAHD. Others are congratulatory as they verbally

envision a life of leisure, and some have admitted they could not do it and wish him luck with it. While he brushes these comments off with humor, he also goes through people's initial reactions on a regular basis because of moving so much. Brad has been teased a bit by friends with comments like, "Oh, you're the wife, ha ha ha." But most people "think it's awesome and say they wish they could stay home with their kids." Others are curious about what it is like. Overall, people have shown him a lot of interest and positive responses: "I think the people who make fun of me are minimal, and the rest are pretty supporting."

Five of the SAHDs in my group talked of negative interactions that cut into their sense of Well-Being. Three of them talked about difficulties with the older generation, though Daffy had the only example of direct hostilities in my interview group. He talked of letting his father-in-law in the house, because he wants his kids to have a relationship with their grandfather. However, the two of them do not really speak to each other. His father-in-law is openly hostile to Daffy as primary childcare provider even though he also works a night-shift job.

Some comments from others are processed in a negative way by SAHDs. John 153 talked of his frustration about a comment his wife made in asking him to do something, "because you're home all day." Rick talked about comments from former colleagues who found out that he had switched gears to be with his kids:

They say "You quit and you're going to stay at home? That's awesome. I wish I could do that." But people say that, but they would never do that because of the bruised ego, and the minority of the people are going to think, "Oh, he's lazy," or "that's the woman's job," or whatever.

Jake has an interesting take on negative stereotyping:

I don't think people have been directly, like, rude or insulting or anything that. Probably it is my own insecurities that probably just pull at me, you know. My wife's family is ultra-accomplished. My wife is a physician and her brother and sister are lawyers. And her other sister is finishing up her dental residency, and it seems they're all just, you know, super high achievers. And I don't feel like a slouch or anything, but it's like, I don't know, you wonder how your mother- and father-in-law regard you. As far as people in the public, I don't feel chastened or whatever. But probably more than anything, it's my own insecurities.

Bob recognized early on that people he met gravitated to talking about his paid work (photography and videography), even though it is now "a small sliver" of what he does: "It used to throw me off at first but now— [he shrugs]. I am so passed it." For Bob, the response after the surprise was initially frustrating. Some people disconnected the conversation, because they seemed to have nothing else to say. John 153 expressed this point also:

The response typically is, "Oh, how great! That's great for you." And then that's it. Whereas before there was a follow-up in the conversation, but with the SAHD thing it dies there. I think it's genuine, but I have nothing to talk to you about, then. But I think it's the same for me. What am I going to explain to somebody, you know, "What are you doing?" Well, you know, trying to potty train him and it's a battle. And for most dads, they have no concept what you're talking about.

Rick said he clung to his work title in his transition period. Since he was able to do some consulting projects, he would say, "I'm an at-home dad, but I have this business.

And people would focus on the business side of things.” At the same time, he read between the lines of people’s comments and felt them as barbs: “People don’t say it outright to you, but I just told a friend and he said, ‘I got no problem with that.’ He’s implying that people do have a problem with that.”

The extent to which people incorrectly group or categorize SAHDs (*RQ<sub>8</sub>*) was not as overtly problematic for this interview group, unlike some of the SAHD reports in the past (e.g. Star, 2000; Cipriani, 1999; Amoroso, 1996). None of these SAHDs has been misjudged as a stalker in the park or a kidnapper in the mall. Nor have they been mistaken as the babysitter when someone struck up a conversation with them. It seems that people recognized this role.

The last question I had for “negative affect” was whether SAHDs take part in their own subordination (*RQ<sub>9</sub>*). To some extent, they do subordinate themselves when they partake when they second-guess hidden meaning in comments from others, as described above. Certainly, those who continued to refer to a job or business-at-home are attempting to appear part of the dominant group. Yet, this aspect seems to be a fleeting one for those who refocus on domestic life. The largest issue is isolation, and the extent to which they try to stay invisible subordinates them to the dominant culture. As described above, it is often the women in their lives who are helping them through these issues.

### *Nurturing*

As part of my interviews, I observed six Stay-At-Home Dads with their children in the context of their homes. I looked for skinship (*RQ<sub>10</sub>*) and gaze-ship (*RQ<sub>11</sub>*) connections between caretaker and child.

Bob had an 11-month-old daughter who was not yet walking on her own, but was traversing the room by hanging onto the furniture. They were remodeling the house, but they had a finished attic room that was dust- and debris-free. It had a large flat screen television and various electronic boxes, which were blocked off with furniture and stiff cushions stuffed upright in between. A Disney animation movie was playing on the television. As Bob set his daughter down and secured the baby gate to the stairs, she began a tour of the room by edging along the furniture. Bob watched her continuously as we talked—one long gaze-ship session. He quickly came to the rescue of any object, such as the remote control, that he did not want her to have. Sometimes he replaced an object with a toy before she realized it was in her path. Once she “fell,” which was more of a hard sit-down. In this case, he waited to see her reaction. She fussed a little, then got back up and continued her progress around the room. Eventually, she came to Bob and climbed into his lap. She seemed to notice the television, and was distracted by that.

This session consisted of one long gaze-ship of about 45 minutes, in which the daughter never returned the gaze. Rather, she seemed to take her father’s presence for granted. She knew exactly where to find him when she wanted to crawl in his lap. Skinship then lasted about half an hour.

Captain has a four-year-old son and he babysits two boys, one a six-year-old first-grader who came in after school, and his younger brother who is the same age as his own

son. The house had a large “great room” that included a living room and a dining area. The kitchen was open to this area, separated partially by a counter. During my visit, the four-year-olds primarily played in the living room area while Captain and I sat in the dining area and talked. Captain chose a chair in which he could watch the boys easily. The four-year-olds mostly played relatively quietly with Legos in the living room area, but went to Captain periodically. For example, the boys brought him a mechanical toy that was not working properly. As Captain fiddled with it, one of the boys crawled in his lap while the other took the neighboring chair. Captain also excused himself several times to tend to the boys without them asking for him first. When the six-year-old came in after school, it was as if he was coming into his own home. A gregarious young man, he came and talked with us a little before joining the four-year-olds.

Captain primarily engaged in gaze-ship, glancing at the four-year-olds every few minutes ( $n=12$  in a one-hour period, each lasting two to three seconds). He was able to preempt some requests from the boys by anticipating their needs. All three boys returned or initiated gaze-ship when they talked to him. Captain did not initiate any skinship, but it was clear that the four-year-olds were used to climbing in his lap. Captain also seemed to take this for granted, deftly incorporating a child on his lap while he continued to fix the toy. Gaze-ship and skinship did not overlap.

Jason has three sons, a five-year-old in kindergarten, a three-year-old in two-day preschool, and a 6-week-old. He requested that I come interview him on one of his easier afternoons when the older two children were in school. Therefore, I only had the opportunity to observe him with the infant, who mostly slept. At first I was not aware of the infant, because he was sleeping in his room down the hall. Jason, however, caught a



slight murmur (sound-ship?) that I did not hear. He brought the infant out and cuddled him to his chest, who went right back to sleep.

For Jason, I was able to record one skinship session that lasted about 15 minutes. This session ended when he realized that it was time to pick up his other two sons and he had to put the baby in the car carrier. He exhibited one gaze-ship behavior (barely a second long) while he was holding the baby, as he checked to see if the baby was hungry but discovered that he had gone back to sleep.

John 153 has three children, two daughters nine and eight years of age, and a three-year-old son. The daughters were in school at the time of the interview. When I arrived, the son was in quiet time, nestled on the couch while watching a Disney movie. For the duration of the movie, the son remained on the couch and focused on the movie. The living and dining rooms were open to each other, allowing John 153 to talk with me at the dining room table, while still able to keep an eye on his son. When the movie ended, the son got up and came into the dining room. He played drums on the bottom of several kitchen kettles.

While the son was in quiet time, John 153 glanced at him three times over a one-hour period, for about two seconds each time. After the quiet period, he watched his son build his “drum set” using kitchen kettles on a bench in the dining room (one gaze lasting several minutes). His son seemed to expect more interaction than he was getting at the time, and twice announced, “Watch me, daddy.” John 153 would respond with both gaze and a verbal response (n=2, each lasting as long as the reply comment, about five seconds). Neither John 153 nor his son initiated skinship behavior.

Dan and his wife adopted a one-year-old boy. At the time of the interview, they had had him for six months. Dan told me that their son had just had drainage tubes removed from his ears. The ear problems affected his hearing, which cascaded to affecting his speech development. Aside from communication problems, Dan had not yet attuned himself to his son. Further, he talked of “always looking for things to do *for* him,” but not *with* him. Dan’s gaze-ship generally seemed to be late in registering his son’s activities, and so his son broke a vase before he realized what was going on. He talked of similar situations such as when he left his son in the grocery cart for a few minutes while he picked out mushrooms, only to return to find his son had grabbed a bag of candy and was indulging in a messy feast.

I did not count any gaze-ship occurrences, because the times Dan looked at his son were not empathy driven. I counted one skinship behavior. When it was time for me to go, he picked up his son and encouraged him to wave good-bye.

Daffy has four-year-old twin boys and a two-year-old daughter. On the day of my appointment, the weather was blustery, and Daffy explained that the children had not been outside to let off their excess energy. Indeed, skinship initiated by the twins was primarily jumping and diving at their dad. This rough play, though, was obviously a regular point of connection with their dad. Eventually, Daffy got the boys to play in their room and his daughter took over with her version of skinship by sitting on his lap. This skinship session lasted several minutes, and then she got up. I did not get a good gaze-ship count because of all the activity.

### *Comparison with Previous Interviews*

In this section, I compared the results of a communication-of-role study I did in 2006 and presented at NCA, as mentioned the methods section. These interviews were all by phone to SAHDs in the western United States. There are considerable points in common with the current interview group, but also a few differences.

### *Demographics*

Of the eleven participants in this group, all identified themselves as Caucasian. They ranged in age from late 20s to late 40s, with an average age of 39.1. Education level finished ranged from high school to Ph.D. Several had multiple degrees (e.g. second B.A.) and others had considerable technical or mechanical training. Nine of the participants were current SAHDs, two had taken on the role in the past and now had grown children. This phone interview group consisted of primary caregivers for one to four children, most of whom were under the age of five. Most respondents had been the primary caregiver of their children since the oldest was born. One had worked part time when he had just one child to care for; one had done so when his child became school-aged. Another worked on a graduate degree while being primary-care parent. Still another continued to work nights and take care of his child during the day, napping when his child napped. Two of the Stay-At-Home Dads interviewed have an at-home business, though one was preparing to put that aside as his wife returned to work from maternity leave for their third child. The rest were at-home dads according to the more strict U.S. Census Bureau definition. All were married and their wives worked full time day jobs,

including careers such as lawyer, physician, school administrator, college professor, and company vice president.

The education range is the same for both interview groups (high school to Ph.D.), though the current group has a slightly lower average (high school plus a couple of years of college) than the 2006 group (attained Bachelor's degree). All SAHDs in both groups are married, and their wives are primary financial support. This financial arrangement also held for the three former SAHDs I interviewed, when they were SAHDs. Unlike the 2006 group, which maintained a middleclass income, the current group had two SAHD family groups that were in the income bracket eligible for government assistance.

All SAHDs from both interview groups self-identified themselves as Caucasian/White. The Census Bureau also shows that this is by far the largest race group of SAHDs, as mentioned above. While this number differential alone may seem to be a reason for garnering only White SAHDs, we still need to look at why this differential exists.

Age for both groups is similar. The range for the current group is 31 to 49. This is a slightly smaller range than the 2006 group, which was 27-48. The average age of the current group is also a little younger at 37.6, as compared to the 2006 group average of 39.1. This difference is minimal, especially considering that the average age of both groups fits in the same U.S. Census Bureau category. The ranges for both groups fit in the peak SAHD occurrence age ranges.

### *Positive Affect and Satisfaction*

The reasons why the men in both groups decided to take on the role of Stay-At-Home Dad are the same. In both groups, finances and family values are deeply entwined.

A majority of SAHDs from both interview groups talked of comparing the cost of daycare to their own income contributions to the family. In other words, many of the SAHDs I interviewed lived a pre-children lifestyle in which they earned considerably less than their wives. Both groups also had SAHDs that had comparable salaries to their wives, but the men were ready for a career change, or they defaulted into the role owing to wife's disposition or job. Andrew was exemplar of the career change and default-into-the role SAHDs. A former middle school teacher, his wife had become a school district administrator. Andrew opted to take advantage of a drawdown in the school district near the time his son was due, and became the primary care parent.

When asked about future plans, none of the 2006 SAHDs talked about returning to former careers. Instead, they talked about finding work that would be more compatible to family life. For example, Marc, who has a Ph.D. was interested in adjunct positions at the local community college, if he could teach evenings when his wife could be home with the children. While the current SAHDs who were looking to return to work said they would like to find family-friendly jobs, they were less optimistic than the 2006 group of being able to find that kind of position.

Aside from financial considerations about daycare, comments reflecting strong commitment to their children, and often pre-planning that one parent would stay at home were common. Marc's response reflected the 2006 SAHDs:

My wife and I pretty much decided that it was important for one of us to... we

decided we wanted to raise our kids, when we had our first one and we didn't want to be sending him off to have someone else do it.

This sentiment echoed in the current SAHD group. John 153 said, "We didn't want to ship the kids out to spend all day with someone else, and pay for it." Jake's exemplar quote (p. 49 above) also suggested a general mistrust of daycare centers that members of both groups shared.

### *Negative Stereotyping and Traditionalism*

For the 2006 group, the older generation offered a mix of positive and negative reactions. Blake, a respondent who worked nights spoke of his supportive parents and in-laws who helped with their grandson on a regular basis so that he could get a little extra sleep. Marc told of the retired gentleman next door, who helped just by having him over for coffee and letting the kids run around the yard. This kind of support shows a general acceptance of Stay-At-Home Dads.

Of the respondents who reported odd or negative comments from others about their role, the tone of the most common messages pointed toward other people not being able to work out a social frame of reference for the 2006 SAHDs, rather than any negative intent. As Henry, one of the former SAHDs described it, people related to him better when they also knew he was a graduate student, the volunteer in the school library, member of the PTA, etc.—all frames of social reference with which they could connect. Charlie, another former Stay-At-Home Dad, reported similar circumstances for being accepted. Voted community citizen of the year with his wife, everyone knew him, trusted him, and was comfortable around him.

Several 2006 Stay-At-Home Dads noted the isolation due to tokenism when they are out with their children. They spoke of moms at the park avoiding them and responding to conversation initiation so curtly as to make them feel their presence was not wanted, “like I was some pervert or something.” Tom related more benign comments:

I get plenty of responses, such as, I was on the bike trail with my youngest son at the time, and, “Oh, dad’s day off” or something like that was the response... “It’s daddy’s turn to take care of the kids,” someone said at a store one time, and I’m like, yeah, yeah, I take care of them five days a week... It was very interesting because I had several incidents when they, people, would imply that it was not my normal routine, and that I was taking the day off or something like that.

Like the current group of SAHDS, the 2006 group showed sensitivity to comments that may not have been negatively intended. Dennis, who comes from a conservative background, said, “My mom and her sisters... are always amazed when I’m discussing the kids, and they’re ‘Oh you’re still staying at home,’ like just suddenly my wife quit her job and I developed a career overnight.”

Their visibility as tokens also bothered the 2006 SAHDs at times: “It’s just that I’m aware, you know, that I’m a little different from, ah, what most guys end up doing.” While they may be welcomed at *Mommy and Me* groups, they found considerable solace in finding other SAHDs:

It is nice to just run into somebody with the same experience... I don’t necessarily want someone to tell me that their experience has been any harder or easier than mine, or whatever. I just want somebody to listen... to lend an ear. Not to say that

my wife doesn't, but the guy I'm talking to knows the social pressures that you're putting yourself under, because you're a SAHD.

### *Establishing Subjective Well-Being*

Just as the majority of the current group of SAHDs went through a transition process in which they re-established a positive sense of self, the 2006 SAHDs struggled to readjust their bread-winner identity. As Dennis candidly put it:

I think you do a lot of soul searching as far as how important you are. I think men take for granted the thought that they are important because they go out and bring home the money, and the wife stays home. And then when the wife's doin' it and you stay home with the kids, you don't have someone that's dependent on you.

You're dependent on somebody else now... I think the first couple of months kinda makes it or breaks it for guys. You know, if they have the mentality and the machismo to be able to hang in there...

Having overcome this hurdle, most of them wrapped their personal satisfaction and pride around their children's achievements. More so than the current interview group, the 2006 group gushed about their children. However, SAHDs in both groups commonly talked of the marvels of being present for landmark development markers, such as baby taking first steps or children advancing in reading skills.

As a test of how much they enjoyed their role as primary care parent, I asked both groups whether they would recommend other men take on this role. The 2006 group is in agreement with the majority of the current group. As Henry, one of the former SAHDs from that group articulated:



Were I to talk to somebody at that decision point right now, I would recommend it. I think it is an experience that every guy ought to have at some point in their lives... I have a good relationship with our kids, and I think it really made a difference with that.

The traditional male role identity does not die just because these men have taken on a counter-cultural role. They may have the same job as Stay-At-Home Moms, but they tackle it from their own masculine perspective. SAHDs in both groups talked of negotiated housework chores with their wives, but also maintaining such traditional male roles as household handyman managing the family finances.

In the following section, I discuss the meanings of the results for each of the research questions. I also connect observations and interview information with pertinent theories.

## DISCUSSION OF QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

This section covers a discussion of qualitative information I garnered from the face-to-face interviews of SAHDs. I also discuss information from the 2006 phone interviews with SAHDs where it is pertinent.

### *Demographics*

In *RQ<sub>2</sub>*, I asked if SAHDs had common elements in their life histories. I included their general demographics in this section as well.

Varvus (2002) did a mass media study in which she noted that White SAHDs were almost exclusively the only racial group appearing in the news and on talk shows. Additionally, a handful of SAHDs were making considerable repeat appearances. My interview group was 100 percent White, and those I interviewed in 2006 were also all White. Interestingly, SAHMs are overwhelmingly White as well (U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey Table FG8, 2006). I think this shows that having a parent at home to care for the children is a matter of social class and a reification of the 1950s idealized family. SAHDs, then, have used their agency to recreate the White idealized 50s family structure but pragmatically modified as the father in the at-home parent position (Structuration Theory, Giddens, 1979). SAHDs may be acting in what May and Mumby would consider the practical consciousness, described as “knowledge and skills we can’t put into words but use in action” (2005, p. 176).

Further, Gearson (1999) found that involved fathers tended (1) to “chose either intrinsically satisfying or less demanding work, even at the expense of lower pay and prestige” (p. 143), (2) are “more likely [than primary breadwinners] to veer away from

high-pressured careers or to hit an occupational dead end” (p. 170), and (3) are more likely than both autonomous men and primary breadwinners to “become involved or to seek involvement with a career- or work-committed partner” (p.170). This describes many of the SAHDs in both the current and 2006 interview groups. It also offers a glimpse of a mindset of a group larger than SAHDs—that of the involved father.

Visibility is a primary dilemma for tokens (Kanter, 1977). It is being singled out for being different, of being the focus of polarized stereotyping for not embodying the salient characteristics of the in-group. Even if the attention is positive, its persistence is, at the very least, irritating. I had no idea how powerful such an experience was until a man joined my Jazzercise group. The husband of one of the regular attendees, he has always been welcome. On the first day, people congratulated him for coming. On successive days he was the “hot topic” in the little chitchat groups before class started. People asked his wife about him and made comments all within his earshot. Additionally, in the Jazzercise micro-culture, it is common for instructors to talk to individual members while exercising. This is usually encouragement or describing a jazz step to a member that is having trouble doing it. Most all new members have problems with some of the steps, and even long-term members often need some repetitions of a step when a new routine is introduced. I suggest that, for the man who joined our group, this attention made him feel excessively visible and incompetent. He eventually told the main instructor that she needed to start a men’s class and his attendance is dwindling.

This example is useful in understanding how men who become SAHDs may feel. As tokens, they may be extremely sensitive to comments about them and often default to interpreting them negatively.

I argue that the visibility of tokens (Kanter, 1977), and therefore their perceived and actual negative stereotyping of their counter-cultural choice, are primary deterrents (e.g. Eveld, 2003; Warren 2002; Stewart, 2001; Mawhorr, 2000). It is difficult for White men, who belong to the traditionally highest esteemed and dominant group in this society, to take on this extremely opposing role. For minorities, the visibility and negative stereotyping are both at a higher level, and thus a stronger deterrent (e.g. Black, 2008; Elias, 2007). This is why I think minority SAHDs are much more reticent about admitting what they do, and thus do not volunteer to be interviewed. Unfortunately, this also shows how the SAHD trend can be obstructed. I discuss this more in the final conclusions.

John 153 had further insights. He volunteers as an assistant coach for a semi-professional team, actively participates in the ministry of his church, and is co-authoring a sports coaching book—aside from being a Stay-At-Home Dad. When a survey comes around, he can self-identify as a member of any or all of those roles. Aside from government surveys, which might bring on tax fines for expected undeclared income, SAHDs can hide behind a number of roles. This is exactly what Bob, Rick and several other SAHDs did in their transition process. Rick used to say “I’m an at-home dad but I have this business.” These behaviors suggest to me that being a token is stressful and very much a “negative affect” in accordance with Diener’s (2000) description. What is important is that the majority of the SAHDs I interviewed have transitioned into their role to the extent that it bothers them much less than when they first started being the primary caregiver. As Bob said, “I’m so passed that.”

Age is another interesting factor. As Daffy observed, “People we know, we’re all 29 or 30 when we had our first kid.” The mean age at which the men in my interview

group became fathers is 33.6, and their wives are all about same age as they are. This does not quite hold for all the SAHDs in the 2006 interview group, in which some of the wives were older. However, the SAHDs in that group were an average age of 34.6 when they had their first child.

According to information from the National Center for Health Statistics, the age at which women are now having their first child is an average of 3.6 years later than women in 1970—at age 25 instead of 21.4 (Mathews & Hamilton, 2009). Both of my interview groups surpass the national average; four of the current group actually fit in the fast-growing group that is having children at age 35 and older. Whereas in 1970, one out of 100 first births were to women 35 or older, that number increased to one out of 12 by 2006 (Mathews & Hamilton, 2009). Nationally, the most common age range for men to become SAHDs is mid-30s to mid-40s (U.S. Census Bureau, 2006). All of the current SAHDs in my interview group fit in this range.

From the SAHDs' viewpoint, being in their 30s was a necessary component in their ability to take on this role. Like John 153, many of the SAHDs in the interview group talked of circumstances leading to them being the default at-home parent. Their wives were in the midst of reaching their career goals, and they found daycare to be both expensive and relationship distancing with their children. Yet, as Rick put it, he felt he had to be over 30 to be able to make this decision. He had to be a success, and he also had to realize that job rewards were diminishing. Kinjiru said he became a SAHD because he could not find a job in their new location. However, he also said that he would not have considered the role when he was in his 20s. He just had to have a job at that time in his life.

Erikson's (1980, 1982) Life Cycle Phases Theory suggests that these men have reached the adult stage in which the primary struggle is over generativity. These men have reached a point in their lives when they want to be "standard-bearers" (Harris, 1994) for the next generation. Erikson did not fix a specific age range to the adult stage. However, Wethington did connect this life cycle stage to people around age 40, as reaching a "symbolic (or physical) marker of age" (2000, p. 86). Additionally, not having children until later in life prolongs a more care-free status of independence with more disposable income. If adulthood is defined as including all the traditional responsibilities of sustaining a family, then prolonging childlessness is a way of prolonging a youth phase in life. Having children later in life may make the generative phase more powerful. Considering that American children are dependent on their parents for about 20 years, SAHDs may be projecting a psychological "clock" akin to, and working with their wives' "biological clock" as they realize how old they will be by the time their children are grown. I argue the desire to have children and to savor the experience of raising them, whether they originally fell into the role because of layoffs, financial issues, or their concerns about daycare quality, satisfies their need to be generative and that this need is very strong for them.

In looking at the childhood backgrounds of this group of SAHDs, I was searching for a match with Inglehart's (1977) Postmaterialists: people who are more likely to take on a social cause. According to this theory, Postmaterialists are primarily middleclass, have relatively high levels of education, are politically and environmentally aware, and feel reasonably secure ( Inglehart, 1990, p. 372). At a time when attaining a Bachelor's degree is common in the mainstream U.S. culture, the fact that about half of my interview

group has not finished college seems to fall short of the Postmaterialist requirements. However, the number of men in the U.S. who go to college has been less than 50% of high school graduates since 1979 (Davis & Bauman, U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). Compared to this national statistic, then, SAHDs do fit the Postmaterialist education requirement.

I found very little common ground in terms of birth order, traditional or non-traditional parents, school experiences, travel, diversity in their neighborhoods, or experience in caring for younger children. This diversity is a good sign, showing that the SAHD trend is not dependent on specific and limited childhood experiences.

The majority of SAHDs currently feel secure in terms of finances. This is a marker of Postmaterialists (Inglehart, 1971) as well as of Innovators (Rogers, 1962), since financial security can cushion risks. I think this makes Diener's (2000) observations of people with flexible temperament adjusting faster than others possible. Jake's comment, "That I've been able to do this financially is key," was common. Income, more than any other descriptor, is also a marker for the middle class. The SAHDs I interviewed share this marker. The two SAHDs I interviewed whom currently struggle financially grew up in middleclass families, and thus still carry those values and mindset. Current SAHDs, like most members of their generation, have been raised in an environment that encouraged them to find themselves and develop personal interests almost as much as job preparation.

### *Subjective Well-Being*

Following Diener's (2000) components of Subjective Well-Being, I explored "positive affect" and satisfaction in terms of why these men decided to become SAHDS ( $RQ_3$ ), whether they were satisfied with the role enough to stay in it long term ( $RQ_4$ ), and to investigate what "positive affect" the role offers ( $RQ_5$ ). I also looked for "negative affect." Isolation due to tokenism ( $RQ_6$ ), negative stereotyping ( $RQ_7$ ), mistaken identity grouping ( $RQ_8$ ) and self-subordination (e.g. negative interpretation of reactions, self-imposed isolation) ( $RQ_9$ ) are examples of this aspect of SWB.

How much of SAHD "negative affect" is due to the isolation of tokenism ( $RQ_6$ )? I found a distinction in types of isolation among the Stay-At-Home Dads in my interview group. One type of isolation revolves around caring for a baby or preverbal child. As a former Stay-At-Home Mom, this was a common problem for me as well as many of the SAHMs I knew at the time. Being anchored at home with a short leash is a common novel experience for any new parent. Babies and toddlers are frequently hungry, tired and extremely messy. They have a short attention span and limited tolerance for the pack-and-go experience of running errands. Further, their mode of communication is nonverbal, though often loud. I think most any person who removes him- or herself from the faster-paced, interactive and stimulating realm of work to take on primary care of a baby/child experiences a re-adjustment transition period. For SAHDs, this transition period may make or break their plans to be the at-home primary care parent. For example, Bill, the former SAHD who took on the role for six months, felt so isolated that he began to envy the garbage man.



The isolation of tokenism seems to generate from two directions. First, members of society see that SAHDs are not typical American men who work for pay. They may not be able to carry on a conversation with SAHDs, because they feel they have nothing in common. They may even harbor negative stereotypes about SAHDs.

Secondly, at-home dads may also contribute to their isolation. Not only are they men who are not working for pay, they are primary child caregivers who are not women. More than half of my interview group self-selected to not participate in groups such as *Mommy and Me Gymboree*. Several SAHDs from this group were also surprised to see how many came to the first meetings of the local group. Others, like Kinjiru thought there were no other SAHDs in the immediate neighborhood. Yet his wife interjected that there were at least two others in their own apartment complex. This misconstrued concept of how many SAHDs are in the area adds to their feeling of isolation. Several others believed they have different interests than at-home moms. Dan and John 153 are exemplars, indicating they wanted to be members of a group in which they could talk sports verses recipes or women's personal issues. In addition, two SAHDs specifically stated that they avoid asking about play dates for their children because they are concerned that this would be misunderstood as "hitting on" the at-home moms.

These thoughts are stereotypes from our traditional culture. Therefore, I think that, partly, they are examples of Social Justification Theory. These SAHDs buy in to the system enough to participate in their own subjugation. However, one of the SAHDs is Daffy, who is very conscious of being massively tattooed and considers himself an outlier in society. This does not seem to match with identification of the dominant culture. I think another viable reason for this avoidance is simply that these men are searching for

what is politically correct for people in their in-group. Part of Social Identity Theory is that categorization offers both identity anchors and appropriate behavior maps (Liu and Hilton, 2005). The At-Home Dad group in the Inland Northwest is a recent start-up. There are very few “old-timers” available, or sought after, to create an in-group culture. No one is passing on stories or creating histories to help other in-group members to learn about the SAHD role, nor is there interaction with out-groups to negotiate acceptable behaviors such as SAHDs asking SAHMs for play dates for their children.

However, there has been a national annual At-Home Dad convention since 1996 (e.g. Eveld, 2006; Hitzman, 2002; Dresang, 1996). These conventions offer all kinds of advice as well as attempt to create a sense of in-group identity connections. The convention organizers are tenacious, yet reach a relatively small crowd.

This segues into the point that half of the SAHDs in my interview group made connections with each other via the insistence of the women in their lives. Rick formed the local SAHD group after some prodding from his wife. A story about the start-up group made it to the regional newspaper, and it was primarily wives and/or mothers-in-law who brought this article to the attention of the SAHDs I met.

Part of the reason so few SAHDs know about each other is that they made the decision to take on the role almost exclusively through discussions with their wives. Only one person in my interview group had the opportunity to meet with SAHDs before taking on the role *and* garnered information about it.

Additionally, only two SAHDs in my group mentioned couples/friends whom they knew were considering a similar parenting arrangement. That is, their wives knew of the other couples, of which those wives were co-workers with the SAHDs’ wives. One of

the two SAHDs, however, did mention as an out-loud thought, that perhaps he and his wife should invite a couple contemplated this form of childcare over to talk about being a SAHD. Connection was not a given expectation.

Overall, the SAHDs in this group were not motivated to make connections themselves, but most of them found the group to be a positive endeavor once they joined. It is the women in their lives (e.g. wives and mothers-in-law) that predominantly serve as connectors. The fact that wives are helping their at-home husbands make connections suggests something similar to mentoring. This is an avenue for further research.

As mentioned above, negative stereotyping detracts from Subjective Well-Being (*RQ7*). Like isolation, when negative stereotyping holds sway over the tokens, the sources of angst are from both people in society and the Stay-At-Home Dads themselves.

Some SAHDs are not bothered, or are no longer bothered, by people's comments. Bob is now "so passed it." Like Kinjiru, Jason and Captain, he has realigned his goals and expectations. These SAHDs have joined other in-groups, or created their own little in-group of close friends, which provide the positive recognition from others they need. This positive recognition, according to Benjamin (1988), defines social identity. Even Daffy, who had overt negative stereotyping from his father-in-law, has the in-group of his part-time night job. He is able to deal with the negative relationship with his father-in-law through the "us—them" thinking that can happen with categorization (Social Identity Theory). Daffy talked of the older generation not "getting it." He can discard his father-in-law's attitude, because his father-in-law belongs to a group that is passé and does not understand why men would want to stay home and care for children.

Unlike the 2006 SAHD group, no one in the current interview group said people made comments or acted as if they mistook whom they are (*RQ<sub>8</sub>*). This may be an issue of location, since the newspapers are still documenting reports of this behavior (e.g. Shaver, 2007). I think the role of Stay-At-Home Dads may be a burgeoning category in mainstream U.S. culture, and that people are making fewer mistaken identities. It is also possible that people think SAHDs were laid off from their jobs in the current recession, in which case societal rules of politeness would dictate no comment.

In *RQ<sub>9</sub>*, I asked whether SAHDs partake in their own subordination. Jost and Banaji (1994) posit in Social Justification Theory that minorities do subordinate themselves, and I have already discussed how this may be happening by SAHDs partaking in their own isolation. Now I focus on how SAHDs subordinate themselves in the negative manner in which they interpret comments from others.

Rick is an example of a SAHD reinterpreting comments from his former colleagues. While the colleagues said, “That’s awesome. I wish I could do that,” Rick projected that they never would because of the “bruised ego and the negative things some people are going to think.” People do not have to *say* anything—he *knows* that some are thinking it. Jake felt similarly about his in-laws in a tradition-oriented Asian country, who have not commented at all about his role as at-home parent, but he acknowledged that it was probably more a matter of his own insecurities.

Social Justification Theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) fits quite well here. There are few in-group members with whom SAHDs can connect and draw mutual support, so they maintain the traditional majority ideals. They subjugate themselves for their lack of salient connections to the larger group. Thus, any comment must be a negative one.

The SAHDs who adjusted and became the long-term at-home primary care parents were able to re-organize their lives enough to include enjoyable aspects of their former life experiences (*RQ4*). Jim found projects to do around the house. Rick refocused on optimizing his household. Bob incorporated his photography and videography work experience into creating toddler newscasts—an activity that he could do with his 11-month-old daughter as well as his adult friends.

I think these SAHDs have the buoyant personalities that Diener described in re-establishing Subjective Well-Being (2000, pp. 37-38). They adapted to their new experiences by altering their expectations and realigning their goals. These SAHDs have flexible dispositions. This is especially true for those like Rick who walked away from successful careers, not just jobs that brought in money. They also began to realign their “important domains” (Diener, 2000, pp. 37-38) from work-oriented to parent-oriented. Bob, for example, talked of referring to his job/business less and less.

Some of the SAHDs became “multi-lingual”—a term I adapted to represent how some SAHDs easily code-switch. They are not switching languages. Rather, they switch in-groups and identities, matching discussion topics of various in-groups’ interests. Jason and Daffy have been able to keep their work in-groups and identities intact by working part-time. Because Captain and Kinjiru are active in community groups, they have multiple primary in-groups that help them keep buoyant. That is, they have more possible source options (in-groups) for positive feedback. If they have a challenging day as a parent, they can buoy their self-esteem with a community project or work, and vice versa. I argue that being “multi-lingual” is also instrumental in dealing with the isolation and negative stereotyping of tokenism (Kanter, 1977).

The “positive affect” that is most successful in keeping men interested in remaining in the SAHD role (*RQ<sub>5</sub>*) is their children. The fascination and pride SAHDs display over their children’s developmental progress is intense. Even for the SAHDs who are looking to return to full time paid work spoke of relishing the time they have had with their children. Lipinski (1984) argued that many men are not aware of the emotionally narrow role society expects them to fulfill. I think that release from these constraints has increased SAHDs’ rapture in their children. Certainly, they are relishing in what Erikson (1980, 1982) termed generativity. They are engrossed in “guiding the next generation” (Erikson, 1980, p. 103). To say that this one factor creates enough “positive affect and life satisfaction” (Diener, 2000, p.34) to buoy SAHDs toward Subjective Well-Being seems hardly enough. Yet, nine of the 12 current SAHDs I interviewed strongly showed this identity connection to their role. All of the 2006 SAHDs spoke of this strong connection as well. In general, they talked of how fleeting childhood is, of only having one chance to be around during these formative stages, and how the only real benefit to working is “socialization outside the house.”

Regardless of whether SAHDs took on the role because of choice or economic reasons, they consider this connection with their children invaluable. Additionally, almost all of the SAHDs said they would recommend this role. Those that have a sustainable system are generally also the ones whose wives earn enough for a comfortable lifestyle and they have some sort of work-for-pay themselves.

These interviews suggest that there are several key factors in re-establishing SWB for Stay-At-Home Dads. Having some meaningful work-for-pay and having a comfortable family income are important Subjective Well-Being factors for SAHDs.

“Subjective” is an essential word here, since any resulting unease (guilt over family income or desire for career) seems to be more self-imposed than generating from others. John 153 is the most outspoken about these stressors. He repeatedly spoke of financial struggles, yet his family income is roughly twice as much as Kinjiru or Captain. While John 153 is as active in the community as Kinjiru and Captain, this volunteer work would be much more satisfying to him if he earned a little money from it. A volunteer assistant coach for a semi-pro team, he keeps his career skills sharp just as Rick does in his field. Jim, John 153 and Rick enjoyed their jobs, and as their children become more independent, the “itch” to get paid work in their fields is building. Kinjiru would love to maintain his SAHD role if finances permit. Brad is making plans for the future that include both childcare *and* an at-home business.

I do not think that these stress points are focused on traditional male expectations by coincidence. Rather, I think there is an overlap between self-actualization goals (see Maslow, 1987), and the Social Justification Theory concept of identifying with the dominant group to the point of self-subjugation (Jost and Banaji, 1994). These SAHDs desire to be part of the dominant group, but they want to do so on their own terms. They want to work at something that interests them, and they want a broader spectrum for their lives than that one type of work provides.

Overall, most of the SAHDs I interviewed accepted their innovative role. As mentioned above, (Rogers 1962, 2003), to accept an innovation an individual has to pass through five steps. These steps, in order, are knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation.

For the Stay-At-Home Dads, I think the knowledge step is unconscious. This is the unconscious of Gidden's Structuration Theory (1979), the experiences that they are unaware of (May & Mumby, 2005). Being a SAHD was not on their life trajectories, but when they had a child on the way it was suddenly an option. For some of the SAHDs I interviewed, their wives made the suggestion, for others it was the solution in an economic, job situation, or quality of care puzzle.

At some point, these men figured they could do it. They had discussions with their wives. Some worked out a budget. This is Rogers' (1962, 2003) persuasion stage.

Next are the decision and implementation phases. Here SAHDs line up with Structuration Theory's practical consciousness, "knowledge and skills we can't put into words but use in action" (May & Mumby, 2005, p.176). At this point the husbands left their jobs and took up the role of primary caregiver to their children.

The final phase is confirmation. This is the end of the transition period for SAHDs. They are discursive about owning the role. Discursive is the third aspect of Structuration Theory and refers to what people communicate in words (May & Mumby, 2005, p.176). SAHDs no longer add hide behind an at-home business or freelance work to describe themselves to others. They simply say they take care of their children.

Two of the SAHDs I interviewed did not, or have not yet, completed all these steps. Some are looking to return to work for pay, but their experiences as SAHDs have altered their concepts of parenting and what a father can do. Most have decided to incorporate this new knowledge into what they plan on doing in the future.

Knowing that at-home dads traverse each of the individual five steps toward this innovation, the next question is at what stage is the population of SAHDs? Rogers



described five phases in the overall population for adoption of an innovation. These phases are named for the type of people who adopt the innovation as it takes hold. In order, these groups/phases are innovators, early adopters, early and late majorities, and then laggards.

I consider the SAHDs I interviewed to be almost exclusively innovators. This is based on the information that only one of the SAHDs talked to other SAHDs before he took on the role. The others did not bring in any outside information. I classify this one SAHD as an early adopter.

The At-Home Dad Conventions have now been around for 14 years. The purpose of these conventions is to create a supportive infrastructure, or in Social Identity Theory terms, create a viable in-group. This is an early adopter function, yet it accesses only a few hundred of the thousands of SAHDs that exist in this country. The media only seem to cover it when it is a local event, that is, when the convention is held in that town. While publicity is a problem, another problem is that many SAHDs may not consider the time and expense worth going.

The Inland Northwest At-Home Dad group is relatively new. This concept of SAHDs coming together suggests to me that this area is just beginning to enter the early adopter phase. There are other groups that have been around almost as long as the Conventions. For example, the sister cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul have an active At-Home Dad website in which the term “old-timers” pop up occasionally. This group has been around long enough to have an “older generation” of SAHDs who have passed down the online connections and playgroup meet-ups. This is in early adopter phase. I

suggest that these early adopter, or second generation, groups are more common in the eastern United States, California, and perhaps Texas.

Whether or not the Stay-At-Home Dad trend does reach a sustainable level, those who fill the role now are altering the way society views men's ability to take on nurturing roles. In the following section, I discuss SAHDs and their nurturing behaviors.

### *Nurturing*

For this aspect of my study, I wanted to know how much SAHDS engage in skinship (*RQ<sub>10</sub>*) and gaze-ship (*RQ<sub>11</sub>*). I had a small sample and a short time for observations, however both skinship and gaze-ship were evident.

I suggest that the SAHDs who had infants or toddlers matched more stereotypical mothering behaviors. Jason was attuned to the slightest sound from his youngest son, and responded to him with skinship. Bob watched over his daughter and anticipated possible problems.

Yet, Bob also displayed parenting behaviors that I would consider masculine. When his daughter "fell," he waited to see what her reaction was. Since her displeasure was fleeting, he let her pull herself up. As a woman, my inclination was to zip to her rescue. I think Bob's method will lead to greater independence, where as my inclination would have led to greater dependence.

Captain and John 153 were caring for older, more autonomous children, whom I think were weaning off skinship. Captain did not initiate skinship, but readily allowed and accepted it when the boys initiated it. Neither John 153 nor his son instigated skinship. Captain's gaze-ship was about the same amount as John 153 with his son of

similar age. With older children, I expect the gaze-ship of watching from the adjoining room would also decline.

Daffy displayed the most stereotypically masculine parenting style with his twins in their roughhouse play. His skinship with his daughter, however, is considerably more placid. I suggest that this is due to her younger age as well as being a daughter instead of a son.

As I mentioned above, Dan does not want to consider himself a Stay-At-Home Dad. I think this cognitive dissonance stymies connecting to his son. He is more focused on not wanting to be in this position than on making empathetic connections with his son. Further, when he talked about happy times with his son, they were when he could bask in attention from others. His personal goals are getting in the way of attunement with his son.

For involved parents, I propose that baby-care behaviors are rather generic. Father care is much like mother care. As the child ages, father care does not diminish, but may alter from stereotypical mother care to include allowing more independence and roughhousing.

What is most important about these findings important about these findings is that it negates the concept that men cannot nurture. In scientific research, it only takes one observation counter to a given statement to prove that it is wrong. While I think that men and women are both capable of a wide variety of nurturing behaviors, they have predominantly exhibited them in culturally accepted ways. This is also born out in the many different ways that men and women nurture their children in different cultures.

Having explored the agency aspect of Structuration Theory, I now turn to exploring the structural aspect. This is the quantitative survey section of my study.

## QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS: SAHD SURVEY

This survey explored attitudes that the general public has about SAHDs. It also explored whether these attitudes changed according to hearing about SAHDs in the media, or by meeting SAHDs, and in relation to age and sex of respondents. Income of respondents was explored, but results are not discussed owing to the extreme lack of anything significant.

### *Attitudes About SAHDs*

$H_1$  stated that attributes for Stay-At-Home Dads would rank more negatively than for Stay-At-Home Moms. To test this hypothesis, a factor analysis was performed. The semantic differential responses to 14 opposing word pairs for both SAHDs and SAHMs, to which subjects responded using a seven-point scale, were analyzed using maximum likelihood factor analysis. The scree plot and factor analysis revealed four eigenvalues for SAHMs and three eigenvalues for SAHDs. A Varimax rotation for two reliable corresponding factors were: Emotion SAHD (components: kind, friendly) Cronbach's alpha = .778 and Economic SAHD (components: hardworking, employable, competent, educated) Cronbach's Alpha = .755; and Emotion SAHM (components: kind, friendly) Cronbach's Alpha = .750 and Economic SAHM (components: hardworking, employable, competent, strong, educated) Cronbach's Alpha = .710.

Subjects responded to a seven-point semantic differential scale in which 1 represented the most negative response and 7 represented the most positive response. For the variable Not Economic Choice, Economic Choice was given the value of 1 and Not Economic Choice was given the value of 7. This was an arbitrary designation based on

the higher value representing a trend not dependent on economics. Feminine—Masculine was recoded so that Feminine was high value 7 for SAHMs, and Masculine was high value 7 for SAHDs.

Because there were so few 1 and 2 responses on the seven-point scale for all of the four factored variables (SAHD Economic, SAHD Emotion, SAHM Economic, SAHM Emotion), the response range 1 through 3 was compressed into a single response. This created a corresponding four-point scale for each factor that allowed the post hoc Tukey reliability test to rotate on each one-way analysis of variance. The ANOVA comparing Economic SAHD to Economic SAHM was significant,  $F(3,603) = 53.71$ ,  $p = .000$ . The ANOVA comparing Emotion SAHD to Emotion SAHM was significant,  $F(4,601) = 30.76$ ,  $p = .000$ . The null hypotheses of equal rankings, or higher SAHD rankings, between SAHD economic and SAHM economic, and between SAHD emotion to SAHM emotion are both rejected.

**Table 3: ANOVA, Economic SAHD Factor by Economic SAHM Factor, Emotion SAHD Factor by Emotion SAHM Factor**

Variables	SAHM Means	SAHD Means	F Value	p Value Significance
Economic SAHD by Economic SAHM	3.03	2.81	$F(3,603) = 54.71$	$p = .000$
Emotion SAHD by Emotion SAHD	3.64	3.32	$F(4,601) = 30.76$	$p = .000$

Additionally, each of the 14 word pair individual variables were compared between responses to SAHDs and responses to SAHMs using analysis of variance. The ANOVAs for all variables, except Feminine-Masculine, were significant. The means for all of the 13 significant variables were higher for SAHMs than for SAHDS, except for Educated. SAHDs had a higher mean for this variable. The variable Rich was recoded to

compress the seven-point scale into a six-point scale by combining responses for levels one and two. This was done for both responses to SAHDs and responses to SAHMs, because there were so few responses in these categories for the post hoc Tukey reliability test to rotate. The variable Strong was also recoded for the same reason, but this time it was levels six and seven that were compressed into level six on SAHD and SAHM responses. For all individual variables, except Masculine-Feminine and Educated, the null hypothesis is rejected. For convenience, the means and ANOVA results are presented in a combined table below.

*Table 4: ANOVA Results, SAHD by SAHM Comparisons for Individual Variables*

Individual Variable	SAHM Means	SAHD Means	F Value	p Value
Competent	5.66	5.31	$F(6,595) = 27.02$	$p = .000$
Educated*	4.80	4.87	$F(6,598) = 22.06$	$p = .000$
Employable	5.39	5.21	$F(6,596) = 16.94$	$p = .000$
Feminine-Masculine	5.64	4.90	$F(6,596) = 1.10$	$p = .360$ not significant
Finance-oriented	4.34	4.33	$F(6,596) = 20.67$	$p = .000$
Friendly	5.73	5.49	$F(6,594) = 18.85$	$p = .000$
Hardworking	6.06	5.28	$F(6,597) = 17.13$	$p = .000$
Kind	5.89	5.44	$F(6,595) = 8.02$	$p = .000$
Not Economic Choice	4.13	4.10	$F(6,585) = 19.51$	$p = .000$
Nurturing	6.14	5.27	$F(6,598) = 4.61$	$p = .000$
Respected	4.63	3.87	$F(6,595) = 24.06$	$p = .000$
Rich	4.20	4.06	$F(5,598) = 27.63$	$p = .000$
Secure	4.52	4.20	$F(6,596) = 8.71$	$p = .000$
Strong	5.26	5.01	$F(5,597) = 26.49$	$p = .000$

\* indicates a reversal from the overall trend of SAHMs having higher ratings than SAHDs. It represents SAHDs having a higher rating than SAHMs.

$H_2$  posited that females would rate Stay-At-Home Dads higher than males rate SAHDs. *T*-tests between each of the SAHD 14 individual variables and respondent sex categories were performed to test this hypothesis. Sex of respondents was a significant factor in six of the 14 SAHD individual variables. Generally, women's perceptions of SAHDs were higher than men's perceptions, except for Not Economic Choice and

Respected. Women’s perceptions of SAHD were significantly higher for these six variables: Competent:  $t(498.07) = -3.07, p = .002$ ; Masculine:  $t(470.79) = -2.25, p = .025$ ; Finance-oriented:  $t(510.49) = -2.07, p = .039$ ; Friendly:  $t(491.60) = -2.56, p = .011$ ; Kind:  $t(536.35) = -2.76, p = .006$ ; and Nurturing:  $t(417.18) = -4.98, p = .000$ . The null hypothesis is rejected for these variables, while the null hypothesis is accepted for the remaining variables. For convenience, the means and  $t$ -test results are presented in a combined table below.

**Table 5: T-test Results, SAHD Individual Variables by Respondent Sex**

Individual Variable	Male	Female	$t$ Value	$p$ Value
Competent	5.12	5.43	$t(498.07) = -3.07$	$p = .002$
Educated	4.73	4.95	$t(462.78) = -1.85$	$p = .064$ not significant
Employable	5.17	5.24	$t(497.90) = -.58$	$p = .565$ not significant
Masculine	4.74	5.00	$t(470.79) = -2.25$	$p = .025$
Finance-oriented	4.17	4.43	$t(510.49) = -2.07$	$p = .039$
Friendly	5.34	5.58	$t(491.60) = -2.56$	$p = .011$
Hardworking	5.19	5.33	$t(506.89) = -1.22$	$p = .565$ not significant
Kind	5.29	5.53	$t(536.35) = -2.76$	$p = .225$
Not Economic Choice*	4.25	4.02	$t(488.09) = 1.60$	$p = .111$ not significant
Nurturing	4.96	5.47	$t(417.18) = -4.98$	$p = .000$
Respected*	3.93	3.83	$t(493.87) = .494$	$p = .104$ not significant
Rich*	4.13	4.02	$t(77.35) = .765$	$p = .447$ not significant
Secure	4.18	4.21	$t(498.01) = -.189$	$p = .850$ not significant
Strong	4.89	5.09	$t(477.75) = -1.70$	$p = .091$ not significant

\* indicates a reversal from the overall trend of female respondents rating SAHDs higher. It represents male respondents rating SAHDs higher.

In  $H_3$ , I surmised that male respondents would have stronger ties to tradition than women, rating Stay-At-Home Moms higher for traditional descriptor variables.  $T$ -tests between each of the SAHM 14 individual variables and respondent sex categories were performed. Sex of respondents was a significant factor for seven of the 14 SAHM



variables. Significant results were found for the following variables: Competent:  $t(495.29) = -3.42, p = .001$ ; Educated:  $t(497.70) = -2.08, p = .04$ ; Finance-oriented:  $t(533.29) = -3.90, p = .000$ ; Hardworking:  $t(554.71) = -2.24, p = .03$ ; Not Economic Choice:  $t(496.53) = 2.06, p = .000$ ; Respected:  $t(542.99) = 2.19, p = .029$ ; and Strong:  $t(499.88) = -3.23, p = .001$ . Women's perceptions of SAHMs as Competent, Educated, Finance-oriented, Hardworking, and Strong were all significantly higher than men's perceptions of SAHMs. Men's perceptions of SAHMs for Not Economic Choice and Respected were significantly higher than women's perceptions of SAHMs. The null hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 6: T-test Results, SAHM Individual Variables by Respondent Sex**

Individual Variable	Male Respondents	Female Respondents	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value Significance
Competent	5.47	5.78	$t(495.29) = -3.42$	$p = .001$
Educated	4.67	4.88	$t(497.70) = -2.08$	$p = .04$
Employable	5.28	5.46	$t(475.45) = -1.32$	$p = .091$ not significant
Feminine	5.56	5.69	$t(491.45) = -1.69$	$p = .188$ not significant
Finance-oriented	4.05	4.52	$t(533.29) = -3.90$	$p = .000$
Friendly	5.66	5.77	$t(467.34) = -1.18$	$p = .238$ not significant
Hardworking	5.94	6.13	$t(554.71) = -2.24$	$p = .03$
Kind	5.87	5.91	$t(554.71) = -.476$	$p = .634$ not significant
Not Economic Choice*	4.29	4.03	$t(499.87) = 2.06$	$p = .000$
Nurturing	6.10	6.17	$t(495.11) = -.984$	$p = .326$ not significant
Respected*	4.81	4.52	$t(542.99) = 2.19$	$p = .029$
Rich	4.19	4.21	$t(482.19) = -.330$	$p = .741$ not significant
Secure	4.47	4.56	$t(481.12) = -.775$	$p = .439$ not significant
Strong	5.06	5.39	$t(499.88) = -3.23$	$p = .001$

\* indicates a reversal from the overall trend of female respondents rating SAHMs higher. It represents male respondents rating SAHMs higher.

$H_4$  and  $H_5$  draw from the same results. In  $H_4$ , I surmised that if there was a Gemeinschaft—Gesellschaft shift between generations in mainstream U.S. culture, a signature result would be the oldest age group (Group 4) having the most negative attitudes toward the non-traditional Stay-At-Home Dads. This hypothesis was tested by first running  $t$ -tests between each of the SAHD 14 individual variables and four Age categories: Group 1 = 18 to 22 (students), Group 2 = 23 to 29 (starters), Group 3 = 30 to 55 (current parent zone), and Group 4 = 56 to 93 (seniors). These results are complex. There is an overall trend that suggests an attitude shift between young and old, so I assigned a conditional rejection of the null hypothesis. The chart below shows the means and  $t$ -test results of significant and almost significant groupings within each variable.

**Table 7: Significant Individual SAHD Variables by Respondent Age**

Individual Variable	Group 1 Age 18-22 Means	Group 2 Age 23-29 Means	Group 3 Age 30-55 Means	Group 4 Age 56-93 Means	Significant $t$ Values	$p$ Values
Competent	5.25	5.20	5.59	5.29	(1,3) $t(237.16) = -2.95$ (2,3) $t(95.89) = 2.71$	(1,3) $p = .003$ (2,3) $p = .045$
Educated					Nothing Significant	
Employable	5.30	4.97	5.20	4.89	Almost Significant: (1,4) $t(78.99) = 1.95$	(1,4) $p = .055$
Masculine	4.85	4.70	5.04	5.21	(1,4) $t(88.98) = -2.03$ (2,4) $t(119.05) = -2.13$	(1,4) $p = .045$ (2,4) $p = .035$
Finance-oriented	4.34	4.27	4.63	3.81	(1,4) $t(83.39) = 2.42$ (3,4) $t(118.12) = 3.36$	(1,4) $p = .018$ (3,4) $p = .001$
Friendly	5.58	5.27	5.41	5.31	Almost Significant: (1,2) $t(76.65) = 1.96$	(1,2) $p = .054$
Hardworking	5.25	5.18	5.51	5.11	(3,4) $t(129.94) = 1.98$	(3,4) $p = .05$
Kind					Nothing Significant	
Not Economic Choice	4.37	3.95	3.55	3.67	(1,3) $t(180.81) = 4.47$ (1,4) $t(78.92) = 2.71$	(1,3) $p = .000$ (1,4) $p = .008$
Nurturing	5.19	5.37	5.46	5.30	(1,3) $t(202.98) = -2.20$	(1,3) $p = .03$
Respected					Nothing Significant	
Rich	4.13	4.02	4.07	3.70	(1,4) $t(94.67) = 3.67$ (3,4) $t(124.73) = 2.86$	(1,4) $p = .000$ (3,4) $p = .005$
Secure	4.10	4.10	4.57	4.22	(1,3) $t(185.74) = -2.80$	(1,3) $p = .006$
Strong	5.05	4.95	5.12	4.68	(1,4) $t(84.92) = 1.99$ (3,4) $t(119.94) = 2.11$	(1,4) $p = .05$ (3,4) $p = .037$

For an overview, a grand mean was created from the variables that had significant groupings. Thus, nine individual SAHD variables were used to create the grand mean SAHDsigAGE (SAHD significant Age): Competent, Masculine, Finance-oriented, Hardworking, Not Economic Choice, Nurturing, Rich, Secure, and Strong. A final round of *t*-tests were performed to compare SAHDsigAGE to the Age categories.

From the initial round of *t*-tests, there were two variables that had almost significant groupings: Employable, Groups 1 and 4 compared:  $t(78.99) = 1.95, p = .055$ ; and Friendly, Groups 1 and 2 compared:  $t(76.65) = 1.96, p = .054$ . These were only noteworthy groupings, not used in the grand mean.

The *t*-tests between this grand mean SAHDsigAGE and respondent Age categories revealed a significant difference between Groups 3 and 4:  $t(122.09) = 2.60, p = .011$ . There was also an almost significant difference between Groups 2 and 3:  $t(116.51) = -1.945, p = .054$ . These results show a strongly significant difference between the two age groups that have historically seen the most dramatic variance in technology and life-styles. The null hypothesis is rejected. The chart below shows the means and *t*-test results of significant and almost significant groupings within the SAHDsigAGE variable.

**Table 8: Grand Mead SAHDsigAge by Respondent Age**

Grand Mean Variable	Group 1 Age 18-22 Grand Mean	Group 2 Age 23-29 Grand Mean	Group 3 Age 30-55 Grand Mean	Group 4 Age 56-93 Grand Mean	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
SAHDsigAGE	4.60	4.51	4.72	4.44	(3,4) $t(122.09) = 2.60$ Almost Significant: (2,3) $t(116.51) = -1.945$	(3,4) $p = .011$ (2,3) $p = .054$

As anticipated in  $H_5$ , the data and process used to test  $H_4$  also revealed that primary parent zone Group 3 has the most positive attitudes toward SAHDs, rejecting the null hypothesis. Group 3 had the highest mean, as well as a significant difference with Group 4 [ $t(122.09) = 2.60, p = .011$ ] and almost significant difference with Group 2 [ $t(116.51) = -1.945, p = .054$ ] as shown above.

If there is a *gemeinschaft—gesellschaft* shift amongst the age groups of respondents, there should be a detectible attitude change toward Stay-At-Home Moms as well ( $H_6$ ). Following the same procedures as described above for SAHD individual variables and respondent age, I performed *t*-tests comparing the 14 SAHM individual variables to Age categories described above. Eleven individual variables had significant groupings for SAHMs: Competent, Educated, Finance-oriented, Friendly, Hardworking, Kind, Not Economic Choice, Nurturing, Respected, Rich, and Strong. Since these results also generally suggests an attitude shift between young and old, I assigned a conditional rejection of the null hypothesis. The chart below shows the complete list of variables and indicates which age groupings were significant as well as almost significant.

**Table 9: Significant Individual SAHM Variables by Respondent Age**

Individual Variables	Group 1 Age 18-22 Means	Group 2 Age 23-29 Means	Group 3 Age 30-55 Means	Group 4 Age 56-93 Means	Significant <i>t</i> Values	<i>p</i> Value
Competent	5.51	5.88	6.03	5.60	(1,2) <i>t</i> (85.39) = -2.63 (1,3) <i>t</i> (208.22) = -4.68 (3,4) <i>t</i> (119.39) = 2.65	(1,2) <i>p</i> = .010 (1,3) <i>p</i> = .000 (3,4) <i>p</i> = .009
Educated	4.88	4.45	4.71	4.81	(1,2) <i>t</i> (80.16) = 2.56	(1,2) <i>p</i> = .012
Employable					Nothing Significant	
Feminine	5.68	5.82	5.50	5.47	Almost Significant: (2,3) <i>t</i> (133.19) = 1.92	(2,3) <i>p</i> = .057
Finance-oriented	4.28	4.48	4.65	3.98	(1,3) <i>t</i> (185.06) = -2.36 (3,4) <i>t</i> (108.88) = 2.56	(1,3) <i>p</i> = .019 (3,4) <i>p</i> = .012
Friendly	5.89	5.57	5.47	5.39	(1,2) <i>t</i> (81.94) = 2.28 (1,3) <i>t</i> (176.28) = 3.5 (1,4) <i>t</i> (79.17) = 3.2	(1,2) <i>p</i> = .025 (1,3) <i>p</i> = .001 (1,4) <i>p</i> = .002
Hardworking	5.98	6.22	6.29	5.97	(1,3) <i>t</i> (205.78) = -3.03 Almost Significant: (3,4) <i>t</i> (108.73) = 1.96	(1,3) <i>p</i> = .003 (3,4) <i>p</i> = .053
Kind	6.05	5.88	5.54	5.61	(1,3) <i>t</i> (160.47) = 4.12 (1,4) <i>t</i> (78.03) = 3.07 (2,3) <i>t</i> (140.82) = 2.01	(1,3) <i>p</i> = .000 (1,4) <i>p</i> = .003 (2,3) <i>p</i> = .046
Not Economic Choice	4.32	3.95	3.68	3.67	(1,3) <i>t</i> (166.87) = 3.77	(1,3) <i>p</i> = .000
Nurturing	6.2	6.2	6.06	5.87	(1,4) <i>t</i> (81.30) = 2.42 Almost Significant: (2,4) <i>t</i> (119.58) = 1.94	(1,4) <i>p</i> = .018 (2,4) <i>p</i> = .055
Respected	4.81	4.65	4.01	4.71	(1,3) <i>t</i> (182.28) = 4.57 (2,3) <i>t</i> (136.01) = 2.69 (3,4) <i>t</i> (130.89) = -2.80	(1,3) <i>p</i> = .000 (2,3) <i>p</i> = .008 (3,4) <i>p</i> = .006
Rich	4.32	4.03	4.06	3.97	(1,2) <i>t</i> (80.64) = 2.29 (1,3) <i>t</i> (201.50) = 2.79 (1,4) <i>t</i> (87.42) = 3.01	(1,2) <i>p</i> = .025 (1,3) <i>p</i> = .006 (1,4) <i>p</i> = .003
Secure					Nothing Significant	
Strong	5.23	5.38	5.51	4.85	(1,3) <i>t</i> (179.53) = -2.14 (1,4) <i>t</i> (85.31) = 2.35 (2,4) <i>t</i> (116.52) = 2.37 (3,4) <i>t</i> (135.93) = 3.52	(1,3) <i>p</i> = .033 (1,4) <i>p</i> = .021 (2,4) <i>p</i> = .020 (3,4) <i>p</i> = .001

Following the same method for creating a grand mean as an overview of SAHDs, I created a grand mean, SAHMsigAGE (SAHM significant AGE), of the 11 individual SAHM variables that had significant groupings. Again, there was one variable that had only an almost significant grouping: Feminine, (2,3)  $t(133.19) = 1.92, p = .057$ . This variable was not included in the determination of the grand mean. *T*-tests run between

this grand mean, SAHMsigAGE, and respondent age groupings revealed a significant difference between Groups 1 and 3:  $t(183.27) = 2.35, p = .02$ . There was also a significant difference between Groups 1 and 4:  $t(77.03) = 2.95, p = .004$ . As for SAHDs, Group 4 for SAHMs also has the lowest mean of all the groups. A shift in attitude toward SAHMs by Age of respondents exists as predicted in  $H_6$ , rejecting the null hypothesis. The means and significant  $t$ -test results are in the table below.

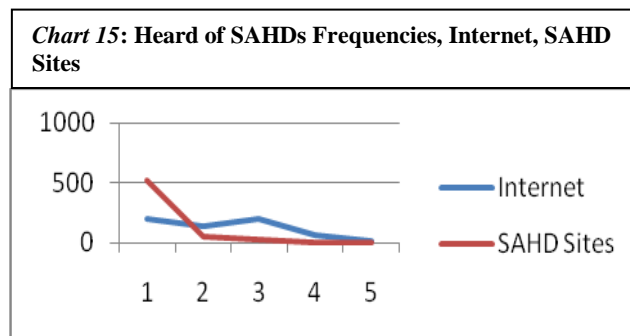
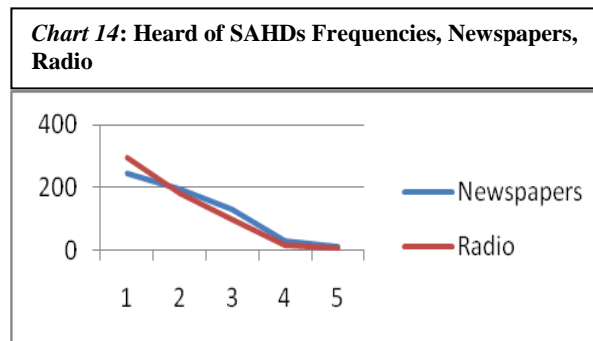
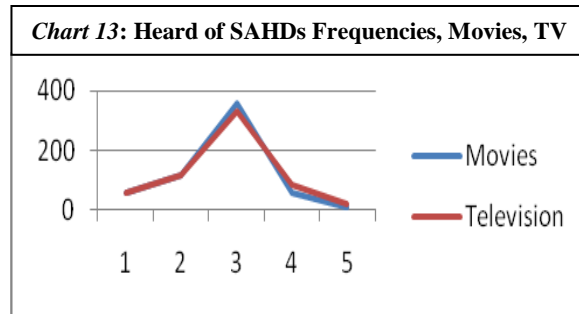
**Table 10: Grand Mean  $T$ -test SAHMsigAge by Respondent Age**

Grand Mean Variable	Group 1 Age 18-22 Grand Mean	Group 2 Age 23-29 Grand Mean	Group 3 Age 30-55 Grand Mean	Group 4 Age 56-93 Grand Mean	$t$ Value	$p$ Value
SAHMsigAGE	5.12	5.06	4.99	4.87	(1,3) $t(183.27) = 2.35$ (1,4) $t(77.03) = 2.95$	(1,3) $p = .02$ (1,4) $p = .004$

#### *SAHDS in the Media*

In this survey sample, 95.4 percent of respondents had heard of SAHDs through movies, television, newspapers, radio, Internet, and/or SAHD support group websites. The response choices were 1 = never, 2 = once, 3 = two to five times, 4 = six to ten times, 5 = more than ten times. Overall, movies and television followed parallel curves with just over half of respondents hearing about SAHDs two to five times: 59.4 percent for movies and 54.2 percent for television. “Never” or “Heard of SAHDs Once” comprised 72.3 percent of responses for newspapers, 79.7 percent of responses for radio, and 94.4 percent for SAHD support group websites. About half (54.1 percent) of the respondents had “Never” or “Heard of SAHDs Once” for the Internet, but 32.1 percent of respondents had Heard about SAHDs two to five times. Thus, while almost all respondents have heard about Stay-At-Home Dads, most have heard about them relatively seldom. Movies and

television are the most common venues for hearing about SAHDs. Least viewed are SAHD support group websites. Three charts below show frequencies of the six venues, separated for easier viewing than one chart.



$H_{7A}$  posited that hearing about SAHDs will improve perceptions of SAHDs.  $T$ -tests between each of the 14 SAHD individual variables and the Heard/Not Heard of

SAHDs variable were performed. Only one variable, Respected, had a significant difference between Heard and Not Heard about SAHDs:  $t(27.08) = -2.291, p = .03$ . Those respondents who had heard about SAHDs before taking this survey had a lower perception of SAHDs being respected, than those hearing about SAHDs for the first time with this survey. The null hypothesis is conditionally accepted; without consideration of the frequency of hearing about SAHDs, hearing about SAHDs does not improve perceptions of SAHDs. In the table below 1 = heard about SAHDs, and 2 = not heard about SAHDs.

**Table 11: T-test, Respected by Heard of SAHDs**

Variable	Heard Mean	Not Heard Mean	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
Respected	3.83	4.69	$t(27.08) = -2.29$	$p = .03$

A *t*-test was used to determine whether one sex had heard of SAHDs more than the other ( $H_{7B}$ ). While it initially appears that men reported hearing of SAHDs significantly more than women, the possible responses were either 1 = Heard or 2 = Not Heard. Therefore, the mean closest to 1 represents the most Heard:  $t(314.19) = 3.07, p = .002$  (See table below). Women have heard of SAHDs more than men. However, for each individual medium, subjects were asked to respond on a scale from one to five as mentioned above. Therefore, women, having the largest mean in each individual medium, have actually heard of SAHDs more than men. Women reported hearing about SAHDs through movies significantly more than men:  $t(430.07) = -2.84, p = .005$ . Women also heard about SAHDs through television significantly more than men:  $t(446.09) = 2.42, p = .016$ . No other media and respondent sex *t*-tests were significant. The null hypothesis is rejected for movies and television.



**Table 12: Significant T-Tests, Heard About SAHDs by Respondent Sex**

Individual Variable	Male Respondents Means	Female Respondents Means	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
Heard (general)*	1.08	1.02	$t(314.19) = 3.07$	$p = .002$
Heard-Movies	2.62	2.82	$t(430.07) = -2.84$	$p = .005$
Heard-TV	2.72	2.91	$t(446.09) = 2.42$	$p = .016$

\* indicates the two-option response question (Heard/Not Heard) that should be read differently from the Likert-scale questions of the various types of media.

$H_{7C}$  considered age differences between respondents, with the expectation that respondents who are currently in the parent zone would be most informed of SAHDs as a childcare option. Heard About SAHDs in general had only one significant grouping showing that Group 3 had heard about SAHDs more than Group 1. Since Group 3 also has the mean closest to 1, the null hypothesis is rejected overall.

Following this lead, respondents in Group 3 were also significantly more likely than those in Group 1 to hear about SAHDs through movies:  $t(188.14) = -2.45, p = .015$ . However, Group 4 has the highest mean; the null hypothesis is accepted for Heard-Movies.

Hearing about SAHDs through television was significantly more common for Group 4 than for Group 1:  $t(74.66) = -2.14, p = .035$ . Group 3 had no significant differences with other groups for television; the null hypothesis is accepted for Heard-Television.

Hearing about SAHDs through newspapers was significantly higher for all groups compared to Group 1: (1,2)  $t(71.84) = -3.09, p = .003$ ; (1,3)  $t(163.06) = -5.79, p = .000$ ; (1,4)  $t(72.74) = -5.40, p = .000$ . Group 2 also heard about SAHDs through newspapers

significantly less than Group 4: (2,4)  $t(120.13) = -2.02, p = .046$ . However, Group 4 has the highest mean; the null hypothesis is accepted for Heard-Newspapers.

Group 3 has heard of SAHDs on the radio more than Group 1:  $t(172.32) = -2.44, p = .016$ . Since Group 3 also has the highest mean, the null hypothesis is rejected for Heard-Radio.

Group 4 is significantly lower than any other age group for hearing about SAHDs through the Internet: (1,4)  $t(80.05) = 2.21, p = .030$ ; (2,4)  $t(120.11) = 3.34, p = .001$ ; (3,4)  $t(133.94) = 2.11, p = .037$ . Additionally, there was a significant Internet access difference between Groups 1 and 2:  $t(74.11) = -2.31, p = .023$ . Since Group 3 does not have the highest mean, the null hypothesis is accepted for Heard-Internet.

There were two significant age group differences for SAHD support group websites: (1,3):  $t(151.48) = -2.710, p = .008$  and (1,4)  $t(69.52) = -1.95, p = .057$ . Groups 3 and 4 heard of SAHDs significantly more often than Group 1 via this medium. Group 3 does not have the highest mean; the null hypothesis is accepted for Heard-SAH Support Group Websites.

**Table 13: Significant T-Tests, Heard About SAHDs by Respondent Age**

Variable	Group 1 Age 18-22 Grand Mean	Group 2 Age 23-29 Grand Mean	Group 3 Age 30-55 Grand Mean	Group 4 Age 56-93 Grand Mean	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
Heard (general)*	1.06	1.03	1.01	1.05	(1,3) $t(451.64) = 3.33$	(1,3) $p = .002$
Movies	2.68	2.68	2.88	2.90	(1,3) $t(188.14) = -2.45$	(1,3) $p = .015$
Television	2.75	2.95	2.89	3.06	(1,4) $t(74.66) = -2.14$	(1,4) $p = .035$
Newspapers	1.71	2.15	2.30	2.56	(1,2) $t(71.84) = -3.09$ (1,3) $t(163.06) = -5.79$ (1,4) $t(72.74) = -5.40$ (2,4) $t(120.13) = -2.02$	(1,2) $p = .003$ (1,3) $p = .000$ (1,4) $p = .000$ (2,4) $p = .046$
Radio	1.70	1.68	1.94	1.89	(1,3) $t(172.32) = -2.44$	(1,3) $p = .016$
Internet	2.30	2.68	2.35	1.95	(1,4) $t(80.05) = 2.21$ (2,4) $t(120.11) = 3.34$ (3,4) $t(133.94) = 2.11$ (1,2) $t(74.11) = -2.31$	(1,4) $p = .030$ (2,4) $p = .001$ (3,4) $p = .037$ (1,2) $p = .023$
SAHD Websites	1.15	1.27	1.35	1.38	(1,3) $t(151.48) = -2.710$ (1,4) $t(69.52) = -1.95$	(1,3) $p = .008$ (1,4) $p = .057$

\* indicates the two-option response question (Heard/Not Heard) that should be read differently from the Likert-scale questions of the various types of media.

$H_{8A}$  posits that positive realism/believability ratings of the medium in which respondents hear about SAHDs will positively correlate with how frequently respondents have heard about SAHDs in that medium. To test this hypothesis, Heard/Not Heard of SAHDs for each medium was compared to realism/believability ratings of corresponding medium via Pearson  $r$  correlations. For this hypothesis testing, the seven-point scale options that ranged from 1 = not at all realistic/believable to 7 = very realistic/believable, were recoded by collapsing levels 5 through 7 in level 5. These levels had very few responses, and collapsing the range to a five-point Likert scale allowed for correlations with the five-point scale of exposure through Heard About SAHDs. The chart below shows that all of the correlations were positive and significant. The correlation between Heard-Movie and RB Movie was significant  $r(591) = .125, p < .001$ . The correlation

between Heard-TV and RB TV was significant  $r(593) = .147, p < .001$ . The correlation between Heard-Newspapers and RB Newspapers was significant  $r(574) = .210, p < .001$ . The correlation between Heard-Radio and RB Radio was significant  $r(558) = .243, p < .001$ . The correlation between Heard-Internet and RB Internet was significant  $r(560) = .264, p < .001$ . The correlation between Heard-SAHD Support Group Websites and RB SAHD Support Group Websites was significant  $r(557) = .092, p < .05$ .

**Table 14: Pearson  $r$  Correlations, Heard by Realistic/Believable**

Correlated Variables	Heard Media Means	RB Media Means	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
Heard-Movies by RB Movies	2.74	2.83	591	.125**
Heard-TV by RB TV	2.83	2.96	593	.147**
Heard-Newspapers by RB Newspapers	1.95	3.64	574	.210**
Heard-Radio by RB Radio	1.76	3.26	558	.243**
Heard-Internet by RB Internet	2.31	3.74	560	.264**
Heard-SAHD Web by RB SAHD Web	1.22	3.91	557	.092*

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed).

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

$H_{8B}$  states that female respondents have more positive realism/believability ratings than male respondents, in the medium in which they hear about SAHDs.  $T$ -tests were also used to compare each of the media realism/believability variables by sex of respondents.

The only significant realistic/believability result was for SAHD Support Group Websites:  $t(478.73) = -2.06, p = .040$ . Women consider this venue more realistic/believable than men. While the null hypothesis is rejected for  $H_{8B}$  for SAHD Support Group Websites, it is only one venue.

**Table 15: Significant  $T$ -test, SAHD Websites RB by Respondent Sex**

Variable	Male Respondents Mean	Female Respondents Mean	$t$ Value	$p$ Value
SAHD Support Group Websites	4.05	4.33	$t(478.73) = -2.06$	$p = .040$

$H_{8C}$  states that respondents age 30 to 55 have more positive realism/believability ratings for media about SAHDs than any other age group. Realism and believability were combined into a grand mean, RB, which was then compared with variable Age via  $t$ -tests.

Group 3 had a much lower opinion of realism/believability (RB) than Group 1 about SAHD movies:  $t(174.35) = 3.60, p = .000$ . Additionally, Group 4 (Seniors age 56-93) had a lower opinion of realism/believability (RB) about SAHD movies compared to Group 1 (Students age 18-22):  $t(74.46) = 2.03, p = .046$ . For Movies RB, the  $H_{8C}$  null hypothesis is accepted.

Television realism/believability means decrease with increasing age at significant levels: (1,2)  $t(81.48) = 2.19, p = .031$ ; (1,3)  $t(193.27) = 5.44, p = .000$ ; and (1,4)  $t(72.61) = 2.32, p = .023$ . For Television RB, the  $H_{8C}$  null hypothesis is accepted.

Group 1 has the highest Newspaper realism/believability mean—almost significantly higher than Group 2:  $t(66.77) = 1.96, p = .055$ . However, there were no significant groupings for newspaper realism/believability. For newspapers, the  $H_{8C}$  null hypothesis is accepted.

While Radio realism/believability fluctuated, the one significant comparison was between Group 1 and Group 4:  $t(58.32) = 2.80, p = .007$ . The  $H_{8C}$  null hypothesis is accepted for Radio RB.

Group 3, the current parent zone, rated hearing about SAHDs on the Internet highest in Realism/Believability. This is a significant difference compared to Groups 1 and 4: (1,3)  $t(148.09) = -2.10, p = .038$  and (3,4)  $t(81.19) = 2.59, p = .011$ . The null hypothesis is rejected for Internet RB.

Group 3 rated SAHD Support Group Websites higher in realism/believability than Group 4:  $t(80.77) = 2.44, p = .017$ . Group 3 also had the highest mean. The null hypothesis is rejected for Support Group Websites RB.

**Table 16: Significant T-Tests, Media RB About SAHDs by Respondent Age**

Variable	Group 1 Mean	Group 2 Mean	Group 3 Mean	Group 4 Mean	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
MoviesRB	3.04	2.76	2.52	2.65	(1,3) $t(174.35) = 3.60$ (1,4) $t(74.46) = 2.03$	(1,3) $p = .000$ (1,4) $p = .046$
TelevisionRB	3.24	2.85	2.51	2.77	(1,2) $t(81.48) = 2.19$ (1,3) $t(193.27) = 5.44$ (1,4) $t(72.61) = 2.32$	(1,2) $p = .031$ (1,3) $p = .000$ (1,4) $p = .023$
NewspapersRB	3.96	3.56	3.67	3.53	Almost Significant (1,2) $t(66.77) = 1.96$	(1,2) $p = .055$
RadioRB	3.49	3.06	3.23	2.89	(1,4) $t(58.32) = 2.80$	(1,4) $p = .007$
InternetRB	3.90	4.12	4.28	3.54	(1,3) $t(148.09) = -2.10$ (3,4) $t(81.19) = 2.59$	(1,3) $p = .038$ (3,4) $p = .011$
SAHD SiteRB	4.20	4.29	4.45	3.74	(3,4) $t(80.77) = 2.44$	(3,4) $p = .017$

$H_{9A}$  predicted that meeting SAHDs results in higher perceptions of them. To test this hypothesis *t*-tests were used to compare Met/Not-Met with each of the individual SAHD variables. Meeting SAHDs was a significant factor in changing perceptions of SAHDs for the following variables: Employable:  $t(564.29) = 2.69, p = .007$ ; Masculine:  $t(571.60) = 2.81, p = .005$ ; Hardworking:  $t(552.21) = 3.27, p = .001$ ; Nurturing:  $t(555.42) = 3.34, p = .001$ ; and Strong:  $t(569.52) = 3.80, p = .000$ . In all of these cases, perceptions became more positive. The null hypothesis is rejected for these variables; it is accepted for the non-significant variables.

**Table 17: Significant T-Tests, Met by Individual Variables**

Variable	Met Mean	Not-Met Mean	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> value
Employable	5.35	5.03	$t(564.29) = 2.69$	$p = .007$
Masculine	5.05	4.73	$t(571.60) = 2.81$	$p = .005$
Hardworking	5.45	5.07	$t(552.21) = 3.27$	$p = .001$
Nurturing	5.41	5.09	$t(555.42) = 3.34$	$p = .001$
Strong	5.21	4.78	$t(569.52) = 3.80$	$p = .000$

I surmised that women met SAHDs more than men ( $H_{9B}$ ). *T*-tests were used to compare the respondent Sex variable with overall Met/Not-Met, Met-Through Friends, Met-SAHDs are Friends, Met-Through Family, and Met-SAHDs Are Family variables. As for the overall Heard/Not Heard variable, there were only two possible responses for the overall Met/Not-Met variable: 1 = Met and 2 = Not-Met. Again, the mean closest to 1 reflects the group that most often meets SAHDs. For the specific ways in which people have met SAHDs, response possibilities ranged from 1 to 5: 1 = never, 2 = once, 3 = two to five times, 4 = six to ten times, and 5 = more than ten times.

Women met SAHDs significantly more than men,  $t(484.38) = 2.24, p = .026$ . Additionally, women meet SAHDs significantly more often for the Met-Through Family variable:  $t(526.51) = -2.08, p = .038$ . There were no significant differences between men and women for Met-Through Friends, Met-SAHDs are Friends, Met-SAHDs Are Family variables. In this case, I conditionally reject the null hypothesis for overall Met and for Met-Through Family variable; the null hypothesis is accepted for Met-Through Friends, Met-SAHDs are Friends, Met-SAHDs Are Family variables.

**Table 18: T-tests, Respondent Sex by Met SAHDs**

Variable	Male Respondents Mean	Female Respondents Mean	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> value
Met/Not-Met*	1.51	1.42	$t(484.38) = 2.24$	$p = .026$
Met-Through Friends	1.46	1.61	$t(526.51) = -2.08$	$p = .038$
Met-SAHDs are Friends			Nothing Significant	
Met-Through Family			Nothing Significant	
Met-SAHDs are Friends			Nothing Significant	

\* indicates the two-option response question (Heard/Not Heard) that should be read differently from the Likert-scale questions of the various types of media.

Since Group 3 is the current parent zone, I surmised that this group would be most likely to meet SAHDs ( $H_{9C}$ ).  $T$ -tests were used to compare the respondent Age categories with overall Met/Not Met, Met Through Friends, Met SAHDs are Friends, Met Through Family, and Met SAHDs Are Family variables.

Four of the six possible Age categories have significant comparisons with the overall Met variable: (1,2)  $t(79.31) = 2.04, p = .044$ ; (1,4)  $t(86.70) = 3.45, p = .001$ ; (2,3)  $t(99.02) = 3.09, p = .003$ ; and (3,4)  $t(109.60) = -2.07, p = .041$ . Group 3 has the closest mean to 1. The  $H_{9C}$  null hypothesis is rejected for the overall Met/Not Met variable.

Met Through Friends has four significant groupings: (1,3)  $t(172.62) = -5.19, p = .000$ ; (1,4)  $t(75.14) = -2.77, p = .007$ ; (2,3)  $t(133.75) = -3.99, p = .000$ ; and (2,4)  $t(114.86) = -2.54, p = .013$ . Group 3 again has the highest mean. The  $H_{9C}$  null hypothesis is rejected for Met Through Friends.

There are four significant age combinations with Met SAHDs Are Friends: (1,2)  $t(68.63) = -2.34, p = .022$ ; (1,3)  $t(157.42) = -7.31, p = .000$ ; (1,4)  $t(72.74) = -3.74, p = .000$ ; and (2,3)  $t(107.91) = -2.27, p = .025$ . Group 3 has significantly met more SAHDs than Groups 1 and 2, and it carries the highest mean of the four groups. The  $H_{9C}$  null hypothesis is rejected for Met SAHDs Are Friends.

While Group 4 has the highest mean for the Met-SAHDs Through Family variable, the one significant age grouping is (1,3)  $t(177.26) = -2.02, p = .045$ . Group 3 has met significantly more SAHDs through family than Group 1. The  $H_{9C}$  null hypothesis is accepted for the Met-SAHDs Through Family variable.



Group 3 has met SAHDS as family significantly more than the two younger groups: (1,3)  $t(157.14) = -4.24, p = .000$  and (2,3)  $t(133.30) = -2.36, p = .020$ . Met-SAHDs Are Family by Age Means show Group 3 again with the highest mean. The  $H_{12}$  null hypothesis is rejected for the Met SAHDs Are Family variable.

**Table 19: Significant T-tests, Respondent Age by Met SAHDs**

Variable	Group 1 Mean	Group 2 Mean	Group 3 Mean	Group 4 Mean	<i>t</i> Value	<i>p</i> Value
Met/Not-Met*	1.56	1.42	1.19	1.33	(1,2) $t(79.31) = 2.04$ (1,4) $t(86.70) = 3.45$ (2,3) $t(99.02) = 3.09$ (3,4) $t(109.60) = -2.07$	(1,2) $p = .044$ (1,4) $p = .001$ (2,3) $p = .003$ (3,4) $p = .041$
Met-Through Friends	1.68	1.63	2.25	2.13	(1,3) $t(172.62) = -5.19$ (1,4) $t(75.14) = -2.77$ (2,3) $t(133.75) = -3.99$ (2,4) $t(114.86) = -2.54$	(1,3) $p = .000$ (1,4) $p = .007$ (2,3) $p = .000$ (2,4) $p = .013$
Met-SAHDs are Friends	1.40	1.77	2.17	1.97	(1,2) $t(68.63) = -2.34$ (1,3) $t(157.42) = -7.31$ (1,4) $t(72.74) = -3.74$ (2,3) $t(107.91) = -2.27$	(1,2) $p = .022$ (1,3) $p = .000$ (1,4) $p = .000$ (2,3) $p = .025$
Met-Through Family	1.48	1.57	1.68	1.70	(1,3) $t(177.26) = -2.02$	(1,3) $p = .045$
Met-SAHDs are Family	1.41	1.50	1.87	1.63	(1,3) $t(157.14) = -4.24$ (2,3) $t(133.30) = -2.36$	(1,3) $p = .000$ (2,3) $p = .020$

\* indicates the two-option response question (Heard/Not Heard) that should be read differently from the Likert-scale questions of the various types of media.

## DISCUSSION OF QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

### *Attitudes about SAHDs*

SAHDs were continually rated lower than SAHMs ( $H_1$ ), as found by the significant ANOVA results for the two Eigenvalue-based factors, Emotion (kind and friendly) and Economic (hardworking, employable, competent, and educated). This is consistent with the Brescoll & Uhlmann (2005) study that found SAHDs ranked lowest in social regard amongst a field of working dads, working moms and Stay-At-Home Moms. It is also no wonder that the factor analysis revealed such results when the individual variables show the same results. Whether significant, almost significant or not significant, all but one ANOVA comparing the individual variables between SAHDs and SAHMs rated SAHMs higher. The Economic factor carries components that are deeply embedded salient descriptors of masculinity (Kimmel, 1996), so becoming a SAHD may be considered turning against his own American male in-group. Such strong reversals are bound to reap less positive opinions than those who are shining examples of the status quo.

Education was the only individual variable in which SAHDs were rated higher than SAHMs, and this was a significant difference. Respondents may have been stereotyping by projecting past standards of women minimizing their education when they married to become SAHMs. However, the Education means for both (SAHM = 4.80, SAHD = 4.87) are significantly different from each other owing more to the large sample size for this survey. In the semantic differential responses, “4” is the neutral position, so respondents are still rather neutral on this variable.

While this research shows that attitudes are lower for SAHDs than for SAHMs, this does not mean they are completely negative. It is more a matter of respondents rating SAHDs not as positively as SAHMs. For example, the individual variable Competent mean for SAHDs was 5.31, while the mean for SAHMs was 5.66. Statistically lower for SAHDs, but not negative.

The preponderance of results from the analyses of variance point to an overall preference for the traditional. Meissner (2005) talks of core gender identity as established by age two. That is, the two-year-old has absorbed the cultural definitions of gender. The more flexible gender role identity must contend with this core gender identity as the individual progresses through life. Further, Benjamin (1988) talks of the need for recognition from others to define self. This is a way in which the resources and actions of the existing structure perpetuates itself (Giddens' Structuration Theory, 1979). These theories help to explain how dramatic changes are hard to accept. A person has to work through considerable internal changes from the established core definition, then face external dissonance—or lack of positive recognition from others who still cling to the established core.

Breaking results down by gender showed that women consistently rated SAHDs higher than men rated them ( $H_2$ ) for competent, masculine, finance-oriented, friendly, kind, and nurturing—a well-rounded combination of both emotion and economic factors. The only variables in which men rated SAHDs higher (Not Economic Choice, Respected, and Rich) were not significant. These three variables also fit the SAHD stereotype of having professional wives and living in upper-middleclass economic echelons (Varvus, 2002). I think these results are due to women being motivated to accept SAHDs, because

this childcare option gives women more freedom to pursue career opportunities. Women can justify being away from their young children by filling the gap with another loving and caring parent.

Men, on the other hand, have no such motivation to accept SAHDs. As I mentioned above, those who have endured the rigors of work to retirement, or are in the process of doing so, may feel that their male in-group is threatened. Or, considering the current economic down turn, men currently in the workforce may feel that being a SAHD is only a practical way to wait through temporary unemployment.

More than 80 percent of my respondents were Caucasian, therefore it is important to consider the views of this demographic. White men have traditionally been the premier members of U.S. society, and as such they may just invoke the old cliché, “Don’t fix it if it isn’t broken.”

While I did not have enough responses from men of other ethnicities to explore differences, my literature review does include newspaper interviews of minority SAHDs. From my preparatory newspaper article reading, I found that men of minority extraction are under stronger pressure to conform to mainstream culture (Shaver, 2007, p. A01). From this I expect that men of minority extraction would have lower opinions of SAHDs, especially if the SAHDs were of a minority ethnicity. This would follow the precepts of Social Justification Theory (Jost and Banaji, 1994), but it is a question for future studies.

Comparing these same individual variables for SAHMs was a way to do a general check on my suppositions about men preferring tradition. In  $H_3$  I stated that men’s attitudes toward Stay-At-Home Moms would also be more traditional than women’s attitudes. In the  $t$ -test comparisons of SAHM individual variables by respondent Sex,

seven variables were significant. Of these, men rated Not Economic Choice and Respected higher than women did. In other words, they considered women staying home to care for children as a personal or traditional choice, not a financial one; and men respect them for that choice.

Women, on the other hand, rated SAHMs significantly higher than men for Competent, Education, Finance-oriented, Hardworking and Strong—individual variable terms that fit in the Economic factor of the factor analysis. While the definition of SAHM is at-home mother, women seem to be focusing on work. Do women consider being an at-home mom work, as in a job? Or is being an at-home mom a lot of work? This is a topic for further research.

Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6 all revolve around looking for signs of two trends: a Gemeinschaft—Gesellschaft shift (G-G shift), and pragmatic considerations of those who are in the current parent age zone needing to make childcare decisions. The G-G shift concerns differences in outlook over time, which I measured in terms of age groups.

For  $H_4$  and  $H_5$ , I compared ratings of the SAHD individual variables to respondent Age. Eleven of the 14 variables had significant differentiations between age groups. Referring again to Meissner (2005), who said that core gender identity is established in early childhood, I deduced that each generation would have formed their identity as a type of snapshot of the norms prevalent of that time period when its members were at that life stage. For a Gemeinschaft—Gesellschaft shift, I was looking for the most differences between younger age groups and Group 4 (respondents age 56-93). This is actually the case. In the  $t$ -test results, Group 4 had the most (10) significant differentiations, and one almost significant result. Six of these significant differentiations

were with Group 1 (respondents age 18-22), and four are with Group 3 (respondents age 30-55). While Group 3 is the current parent zone, indicating a variance due to current differing circumstances, the greater number of significant pairings with Group 1 strongly suggests the G-G shift. Group 4 also has the greatest number of lowest means for the variables with significant and almost significant *t*-test results.

Group 3 has the greatest number of highest means, which indicates that there are circumstantial differences as well. As the group most likely to need childcare, SAHDs represent a pertinent option. That this is an option, however, is due to mindset differences of what is culturally acceptable.

Interestingly, Group 2, aged 23 to 29, was nearly invisible in this study. This group had only three significant differences with other groups, and all of these positioned SAHDs with the lowest mean. I dubbed Group 2 starters, because members of this group are at an age when they have finished college and are beginning to build their independent lives. Like Group 3, the U.S. Census Bureau shows that this group is waiting significantly longer than Group 4 to take up the roles of marriage and parenthood. Members of this group have been in the U.S. school system for most of their lives, training to step out into the workforce, and they have finally reached that point. Therefore like Group 4, Group 2 is oriented toward job/career, especially for men. Group 1 and Group 2 share considerable similarities such as social technology usage and types of media pursuits. In short, I think that Group 2 is invisible in this study because it has points in common all round with the other groups, and very few distinguishing points for itself.

Another way of looking at this data was to create a grand mean (SAHDsigAGE) of the variables that had significant group pairings, and compare this combined variable with Age via *t*-tests. The significant difference between Groups 3 and 4, and the almost-significant difference between Groups 2 and 3, strongly suggests that circumstances for Group 3 are leading the positive perceptions for SAHDs. This allowed me to reject the null hypothesis for  $H_5$ , that Group 3 would *not* have the most positive attitudes toward SAHDs.

The trend of Stay-At-Homes Dads has been tracked by the U.S. Census Bureau since the 1980s, but each successive generation of parents may be pushing the trend. It is now Group 3's turn to make decisions on the viability of this option. I think this age group holds the current innovators and more early adopters (Rogers' Innovation of Diffusion Theory) than the previous age group, judging from the attitude differences between Group 3 and Group 4.

If attitudes are relaxing for SAHDs in successively younger groups, then there should also be some attitude changes for SAHMs ( $H_6$ ). Interestingly, I did find a very strong attitude shift. Group 1 had the most significant differential groupings (17), and Group 4 came in second with 11 significant groupings. The reason becomes clear when looking at the highest and lowest means for each variable. Group 4 had 8 of the lowest means and none of the highest means for the variables with significant groupings. Conversely, Group 1 has seven of the highest means and only one of the lowest means.

Following the same procedure for SAHDs, I created a grand mean, SAHMsigAge, from SAHM individual variables with significant groupings. This grand mean was then compared to respondent Age. For these results, Group 1 significantly rated SAHMs

higher than Groups 3 and 4 rated them. The means actually show a step change with each age group of increasingly positive attitudes toward SAHMs with each younger group.

Part of this explanation is probably economic. All of my Group 1 respondents were college students. As such, members of this group likely still have close support ties to parents, which can increase favorable attitudes for SAHMs. Respondents in Group 4, on the other hand, were raised when children were often more a part of the family income, or at least expected to be independent after high school.

The concept of motherhood has also undergone an emotional change. Members of the younger groups have grown up with the American stereotype of “mom, home and apple pie,” or more recently, the “soccer mom.” Generally, respondents in the younger age groups have participated in more after school programs than Group 4, and mothers have been the most common transport and support parent.

In mainstream U.S. culture, attitudes are often influenced by the media. The rest of my hypotheses explored this influence for the topic of Stay-At-Home Dads.

### *SAHDs in the Media*

The hypotheses about frequency of exposure to the topic of SAHDs in the media ( $H_{7A}$ ,  $H_{7B}$ ,  $H_{7C}$ ) is closely tied to the realistic/believability of media measures ( $H_{8A}$ ,  $H_{8B}$ ,  $H_{8C}$ ). Therefore, this discussion covers  $H_{7A}$  and  $H_{8A}$  together,  $H_{7B}$  and  $H_{8B}$  together, and  $H_{7C}$  and  $H_{8C}$  together. Finally, I discuss how meeting SAHDs influences opinions of them.

Almost all of my 608 respondents had heard about SAHDs. Yet they have heard about them very seldom. This is why I conditionally accepted the  $H_{7A}$  null hypothesis that



hearing about SAHDs would not improve attitudes toward them. There is an old axiom in public relations, for which I unfortunately could not find the source. It says that it takes seven hits (exposures) to make an impression, but 49 hits to change an impression. This axiom can be considered through the lens of Rogers' Theory of Innovation. Recall the five steps that Rogers said people must progress through to adopt an innovation (knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation and confirmation). Knowledge about a topic is the first and easiest step; it does not require many hits, or exposure episodes. Confirmation, on the other hand, is the last step. It takes much more effort to get there—more exposure as the axiom says, but also other factors such as motivation to get through the intervening steps. If the new information is counter to the person's current mindset, then confirmation is even harder to achieve. I think people in general have not heard about SAHDs enough to dispel the prejudice they have about this group that is operating counter to tradition.

An important consideration in the discussion of hearing about SAHDs via various media, is how realistic/believable (RB) each venue is rated in terms of presenting the information ( $H_{8A}$ ). Perceptions of realism and believability of an information source are crucial in determining whether the information is viable or should be discarded. All media listed in the survey positively and significantly correlated with increasing frequency of exposure (Heard of SAHDs variable). This strongly suggests that more exposure to the topic would augment opinion change.

In  $H_{7B}$ , I correctly surmised that women have heard about SAHDs more than men. This was also significantly true for movies and television. Movies that have been made about SAHDs, or fathers as primary caregivers are stereotypically cast as

“chick flicks,” suggesting that this is a topic more of interest to women. Perhaps the same can be said for television programs such as *Murphy Brown*, a sitcom that aired for a decade beginning in 1988. It portrayed a career woman who had a male caregiver for her infant son. I have to say that I am also reminded of the half-dozen online surveys that I sent to men, but who in turn had their wives fill them out. Since the industrial era, the men in U.S. culture have increasingly focused away from domestic considerations, toward earning money (e.g. Gearson, 1993; Griswold, 1993; Weber, 1905, Tocqueville, 1863). As some of the men who gave the survey to their wives to fill out said, “My wife takes care of the family stuff.” Women are the traditional recipients of this kind of information. In addition, if they are stretched between operating in both domestic and work realms (e.g. Hochschild, 1989), they may be more motivated to pay attention to news on this topic since it would help relieve some of their stressors.

Yet, women rated media with higher RB values significantly more than men only for the medium of SAHD support group websites ( $H_{8B}$ ). There were no other significant differentiations between men and women. This suggests that men and women are both discerning about the media for this topic. Women heard about SAHDs more via movies and television, which are venues of story-telling more than factual news.

The ways in which respondents heard about SAHDs varied with age ( $H_{7C}$ ), and the corresponding RB ratings for age groups ( $H_{8C}$ ) are noteworthy. Since age of respondents involves more groups, and more combinations of groupings, this aspect is discussed by each individual medium below.

### *Movies*

Respondents in the current parent zone (Group 3) heard about SAHDs significantly more than respondents who are students (Group 1). Yet, Group 3 had a significantly lower opinion of realism/believability (RB) than Group 1 about SAHD movies.

Similarly, Group 4 (seniors age 56-93) also had a significantly lower RB opinion about SAHD-topic movies compared to Group 1. Group 4 also had the greatest exposure to SAHDs in movies. Group 4 also had the highest mean for the Heard variable, though it did not have a significant *t*-test pairing. Like Group 3, Group 4 had a significantly lower RB rating than Group 1.

### *Television*

Television followed a similar pattern to movies. Hearing about SAHDs through television consistently increased with age, with a significant difference between Groups 1 and 4. RB ratings run up and down, but there is a significant difference between Group 1's highest mean and the means of all the other age groups. There is an especially low dip for Group 3's RB mean, which, being in the current parent zone, may reflect perceptions of actual experience versus portrayals on television. Group 4's RB mean is also low, suggesting members' difficulty in accepting this concept as viable in reality.

### *Newspapers*

The trend with Group 1 continued with newspapers. This group had the lowest Hearing via Newspapers mean, and means for each successive group significantly increased. There are no significant differences by age for RB ratings, though there is an almost significant difference between Groups 1 and 2. Group 1 does, however, have the highest Newspaper RB rating while Group 4 has the lowest.

### *Radio*

Group 1 stands out again for this venue. It had a significantly low mean for hearing about SAHDs through radio, but a significantly high mean for radio realism/believability. Group 3 heard about SAHDs significantly more often than Group 1, and I maintain this is an interest factor for those in the current parent zone. Group 4 has significantly less trust in the SAHD information presented in this medium.

### *Internet*

Group 4 heard about SAHDs through this venue significantly less than any other age group. I think this is an issue of not being technologically savvy or at least not using the Internet much. Interestingly, Group 2, aged 23 to 29, accessed information about SAHDs significantly more than Group 1 or Group 3. This medium is different from those mentioned previously. Television, for example, is an increasingly splintered medium catering to different interests. However, once it is on, a barrage of programs and ads stream past the relatively passive viewer. The Internet, on the other hand, requires constant interaction and more of an active search for specific information. Ads are part of

the milieu of information available at any one time, not the singular point addressed for a span of time. Therefore, respondents in Group 2 have likely sought out SAHD information more often, perhaps because people in this group are beginning to think about becoming parents and what kind childcare arrangements they can do.

### *SAHD Support Group Websites*

SAHD and SAHM Support Group Websites are another type of media in which people need to specifically seek the topic, but even more so than general Internet use. For example, a mention of a movie about SAHDs, such as *Daddy Daycare*, may show up on an Internet search for movie listings. I chose to add SAHD support group websites, because I found them to be full of useful information. They also serve as a communication platform for SAHDs to blog with each other—in essence a social network for SAHDs. People accessing these websites are very specifically interested in learning more about these groups.

However, SAHD Support Group Websites were the least accessed type of venue of all the media types tested. There was one significant relationship between Groups 1 and 3. Surprisingly, Group 4 accessed SAHD websites more than any other group, which seems to fly in the face of my conclusions about this group for Internet use. My one explanation about this is that SAHD Support Group Websites can be considered a subset of the Internet. As such, I may have tapped the end result of the small amount of Internet interaction that this group has done.

Consistent with interest, Group 3 rated SAHD Support Group Websites RB significantly higher than Group 4. Group 4 had the lowest RB mean, which is consistent

with the realism/believability ratings this group gave to the other SAHD information in the other media explored in this survey.

Considering the various media venues overall, Group 1 showed a the lowest exposure, but the highest realism/believability ratings. I think members of Group 1 are heuristically stereotyping because they have little or no actual information. Groups 3 and 4 have had considerably more exposure to the topic of SAHDs through the media, and therefore are aware of how the topic of SAHDs is presented.

This also speaks to the pertinence of the topic. Respondents aged 18 to 22 are far from thinking about parenthood, as indicated by the statistics showing that many people now choose to have children in their late 20s to mid 30s (U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Economic Statistics Division, Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, 2005). Group 1 has probably given little thought or attention to the SAHD trend other than realizing it exists. This is a pertinent topic for Group 3, the current parent zone. I think it is also a viable topic for Group 4, as its members see some of their children and grandchildren embark on this option.

The next set of hypotheses considered the effects of meeting SAHDs on attitudes toward this group. Sex and age of respondents were particular demographics explored.

### *Meeting SAHDS*

Overall, meeting SAHDs does actually result in significant improved attitude ratings ( $H_{9A}$ ), especially for the variables that fit in the Economic SAHD factor that have been traditionally applied to men in U.S. culture: Employable, Masculine, Hardworking,

and Strong. Perceptions of SAHDs Nurturing also improved significantly. This shows that personal experience out-weighed exposure to information in the media.

Women met SAHDs more than men overall and through friends ( $H_{9B}$ ). This is consistent with my other findings about women. Women are motivated to be attuned to this topic, and I think they play a critical role in diffusion of this trend because of it.

Age makes a difference in who meets SAHDs. As expected Group 3, respondents in the current parent zone significantly met the most SAHDs overall, and in every category I explored except Met-Through Family ( $H_{9C}$ ). For this category, it was significantly higher than Group 1, but did not have the highest mean. Group 1 had significantly met SAHDs the least in all categories, except Met-Through Friends where Group 2 had a marginally (not significant) lower mean. These findings co-inside with the Heard by Age results remarkably well. Group 1 has heard and met SAHDs the least. Many respondents in this group are still supplemented by their own parents, and are likely much less interested in becoming parents themselves at this point.

Ironically, I previously surmised that Group 4 found SAHDs to be a pertinent topic because they had sons and/or sons-in law that were SAHDs. This assumption actually has some substantiation in this section; Group 4 has met the most SAHDs through family.

What I think shows a G-G shift is that Group 4 has met SAHDs more than Groups 1 and 2, yet generally maintains the lowest attitudes toward them. Since the peak age group for SAHDs to occur is in the next younger age group (Group 3), some members of Group 4 may have sons or sons-in law that are SAHDs. They have a vested interest in learning about SAHDs, so they more closely follow Group 3 in levels of hearing about

SAHDs and meeting them. However, Group 4 diverges from Group 3 in attitude toward SAHDs, being more negative. Significant differences between the two groups are common—second in frequency only to the number of significant differences between Groups 1 and 4. If there were no G-G shift, I would expect to see similar attitudes between Groups 3 and 4.

In the next section, I bring the conclusions and discussions from the qualitative and quantitative research together. I discuss how findings from both work together to form a more holistic understanding of Stay-At-Home Dads.



## CONCLUSIONS

Time to look at the big question (*RQ1*): Is the Stay-At-Home Dad role in the U.S. a sustainable trend? What I have learned in this study strongly suggests it is sustainable.

### *Economic Choice or Not*

There is no getting around the fact that the current economic recession is instrumental in driving the number of SAHDs up. Historically, this also seems to be the case. For example, the number of SAHDs noticeably rose in 1991, just after the 1990 economic downturn began in this country (United States Economy, 2010), and then dropped off when the economy recovered (U.S. Census Bureau historical statistics 1985 to 2005, 2008).

However, the fact that the numbers of SAHDS generally continue to climb regardless of this country's economic swings suggests that there are more sustaining factors. I think the current upheaval in defining masculinity is a factor (e.g. Gearson, 1996; Kimmel, 1993). For example, dual income households have become common, diminishing the salient breadwinner descriptor of the male sex role. Bly (1990) additionally discusses men's loss of connection with their own fathers, which has instigated some men to seek involved fatherhood (Gearson, 1996).

From the exuberance of comments from SAHDs about seeing their children reach developmental milestones, I think that connecting with their own children is also a strong compensatory role. It may be extra powerful for the majority of SAHDs who are reaching the generativity stage (Erikson, 1980, 1982) later in life. That is, many of these couples are having children later in life than previous generations (U.S. Census Bureau,

Housing and Economic Statistics Division, Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, 2005) and some are having children later than the current average. They may have come to think of experiences with their children as events to cherish, rather than duty, or labor on the family farm.

SAHDs have talked about their milieu of reasons for taking on the role, of which the majority spoke of economics (their income versus daycare costs) as only part of the mix. Other factors include job circumstances for themselves and their wives, daycare quality issues, and temperament. Many of the men had been in jobs with long hours and fewer promotion benefits, while their wives work carried more obligation (such as military and medical school). As parents, these couples were generally not in favor of daycare because it means strangers would be raising their children. They wanted to know their children. Some SAHDs also mentioned temperament, saying they felt they were better suited than their wives for being the primary care parent.

Women in professional careers are on the increase. By 1979, more women than men were entering college and by 2006, 56 percent of graduate students nation-wide were women (Davis, J.W. & Bauman, K.J. U.S. Census Report, 2008). This represents a potential of more sustainable families in which fathers may find it more worthwhile to be the primary care parent if having an at-home parent is a scenario important to the couple. In terms of Structuration Theory, more women having an income that can comfortably support a family represents a structure resource. It allows their spouses to have more role choices.

Group 3 (30-55, parent zone) of my survey respondents thought that SAHDs were making an economic choice significantly more than other age groups. Considering that

this group heard and met SAHDs more than other the other groups, it may well be that they have “ground zero” information on the economy’s current influence. It may simultaneously show this group’s willingness to accept the role of SAHDs and to provide a face-saving reason for men to take on this role.

### *The Stereotype*

As I mentioned in the qualitative interview discussion section, the SAHDs I interviewed were all Caucasian and the U.S. Census Bureau shows that White SAHDs vastly outnumber all other “race” groups. However, the same is true for SAHMs; White at-home moms are also more frequent than all other “races” of at-home moms put together combined. For a trend to succeed, it must cross the lines of what the Census Bureau calls race. In this case, at-home parents, as well as at-home dads, are trends that need to break this barrier to become sustainable. Again using my guiding theory of Structuration, for the SAHD trend to become popular across a broader population, resources and agency need to interact in that direction. Friedman (2009) said that while the U.S. is politically condemned, it is also socially imitated. If the trend becomes common enough among whites, it may be easier for men of other ethnicities to admit they are SAHDs or to consider trying the role. Rogers (1962) calls this the lighthouse function, serving as a beacon for others to see the potential in the new innovation. Both resources and reduced stigma need to be in place for minorities to take on this role. The stigma for minorities can be reduced if there are plentiful White SAHDs and they are widely accepted in society. Then the imitation of status function that Friedman alluded to would

be more possible. Gaining resources, specifically having spouses with comfortable incomes, segues to that part of the SAHD stereotype suggesting they are middleclass.

While some SAHDs I interviewed came from financially struggling families, and others from wealthy ones, they all consider themselves middleclass in mindset and values. All of the SAHDs I interviewed in 2006, and all but two of the current SAHDs in this study, maintain a middleclass income. The U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement (2006) also shows that the peak occurrence of SAHDs is in a staunchly middleclass income bracket. The economic difference between the 2006 and current SAHDs I interviewed suggests that Group 3 from the survey do have a pulse on the economy affecting this trend. The current recession is looking to be stronger than economic downturns in the past quarter century. If this does come to fruition, then the number of SAHDs will likely also increase dramatically. Just as World War II was instrumental in women expanding their roles, a recession or depression at this time might be the structure change that promotes men expanding their roles. Certainly, the percentages of men versus women pursuing higher education is a structure change that is affecting the SAHD trend. This leads to the third stereotype point.

Most of the SAHDs I interviewed overall had schooling beyond high school, some with two-year professional programs, Bachelor degrees, even multiple B.A.s, Master degrees, and two were Ph.D.s. At a time in which men represent less than half of the people in college and graduate school (Davis & Bauman, U.S. Census Bureau, 2008), this represents an educated group.

Ironically, the stereotype (Varvus, 2002) has some substance. More importantly, these attributes also fit in the Postmaterialist (Inglehart, 1971) and Innovator (Rogers, 1962) descriptions, and may be the nutritive environment for the resilient temperament needed for Subjective Well-Being.

There were no other outstanding background commonalities in the SAHDs I interviewed. Gearson (1993) also found this to be true in her study of men and families. She argued that men are pragmatically reacting to current circumstances, rather than acting on predispositions. I also found this to be the case with SAHDs. I think a lack of personal precursors is a healthy sign for a trend. The broader spectrum of backgrounds shows that men in different circumstances are already trying this role.

What is important is that the trend continues from risk-taking innovators onto the early adaptors. Some SAHDs I had interviewed talked of the “old-timers” in locations other than the Inland Northwest—the SAHDs before them who had set up the support group websites and playgroups. Some cities, then, already have successive generations of SAHDs and the current members are early adaptors. A primary role of early adaptors is communication with others, spreading the information about the innovation. All but one of the SAHDs I interviewed overall said they would speak in favor of taking on this role. Conversely, only one current SAHD said he actually talked with a former SAHD about the role before he took it on. Men are coming into the role pragmatically, with very little discussion other than with their wives. This lack of communication with other SAHDs has the potential to stymie the trend.

### *Subjective Well-Being*

Subjective Well-Being is a huge hurdle for anyone taking on such a dramatic reversal from the cultural norm. As men turning their backs on a robust tradition, SAHDs must deal with negative attitudes from themselves (Social Justification Theory) and others (e.g. Social Identity Theory, Tokenism Theory). In short, isolation and self-doubt are key issues for SAHDs that have been “deal-breakers” for some men trying the role.

Yet most of the SAHDs I interviewed were able to adapt to their new circumstances and re-establish their SWB. Again, having a strong relationship with their children has been invaluable as they talked of the things that they would have missed if they were attending to a job/career. The fact that many of them are having children later in life may make the need to be generative (Erikson, 1980, 1982) extra strong.

SAHDs who have some activities that serve as positive identity groups, such as working on a family ministry, a local thespian group, or bicycle racing also help reinstate SWB. However, friends are generally not other SAHDs for this interview group. This is a key communication gap in furthering the trend. In terms of Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation Theory (1962), the trend must expand to the early adopter phase to communicate as the lighthouse function.

Also, hearkening back to economics, having some part-time work for pay is a face-saving measure that some SAHDs have been able to arrange. This helps them maintain their standing in the traditional male sex role definition at the same time that they are stretching that definition.

### *Women as Early Adopters*

What has not come to light in my previous readings is how much the women configure into the trend of SAHDs. From the analysis of surveys, I learned that women have heard about SAHDs more frequently than men have, they meet them more often, and they have higher opinions of SAHDs. This dovetails with the interview analysis. For example, one SAHD interviewee said he did not know of any other SAHDs in the area, but his wife chimed in with the information that there were several in their own apartment complex. In aggregate, SAHDs described deciding to take on the role almost exclusively through talking with their wives. Moreover, it was primarily their wives and female relatives who informed them of the new SAHD support group in the area.

In terms of Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation (1962), women are acting as "lighthouse customer" early adopters. They are instigators, and they are helping SAHDs adjust. In a way, women are primed to think of the SAHD option of childcare when the issue comes up for them. They have been exposed to the topic more than men from movies and on television, and they have met them through family. They may be operating in the practical dimension of human consciousness, which, in Structuration Theory, is the "knowledge and skills we can't put into words but use in action" (May and Mumby, 2005, p.176). Or they may be operating in the unconscious dimension until the information is pertinent to their family needs. In either case, when the question of childcare comes up for them, they are able to bring this knowledge to the discursive dimension.

The role of women in this trend should be researched further. Just as Stay-At-Home Dads are not male mothers, primary economic support women are not female

career-chasers who minimally interact with their children. Anecdotal information from the SAHD interviews suggests that many women fling themselves into family life when they get home from work.

### *The Age of Generativity*

SAHDs talked of needing to be into their 30s to be able to take on the role. Comments ranged from, “I’ve always worked since I was 16, so I felt I had to have a job,” to “I had to prove that I could be a success at work before I could step away from it.” Couples are waiting longer in life to have children than previous generations have (U.S. Census Bureau, Housing and Economic Statistics Division, Fertility and Family Statistics Branch, 2005), in essence extending their own relatively free-of-responsibility youth. There may be a psychological clock for men that corresponds to a biological clock for women, as men contemplated how old they will be when their children are grown. They have reached the stage in Erikson’s theory of life cycles in which having children fulfills their generative needs. As I mentioned above, becoming a parent later in life may make this generativity versus stagnation phase (Erikson, 1980, 1982) stronger as couples look toward how old they will be when their children are grown.

### *Gemeinschaft—Gesellschaft*

Some of the SAHDs I interviewed talked of the “older generation not getting it.” Correspondingly, Group 4, the seniors in the survey section, had the lowest attitude ratings for SAHDS than any other age group. Group 4 also rated what they heard about SAHDs in various media with low realism/believability scores. There is some substance



to SAHDs' claims. To their credit, the SAHDs I interviewed had generally found a way to deal with the issue so that it did not shake their determination to take on or continue the role. Men who adapt to their SAHD role become less concerned about the opinions of others. They build their own personal in-groups for positive feedback and they relish their expanded emotional roles in life.

SAHDs have a general, supportive in-group; Group 3 from the survey is the current parent zone, aged 30 to 55. Respondents in this group are age contemporaries with the age of peak occurrences of SAHDs. This group heard of SAHDs and met SAHDs more than other age groups, and consistently rated SAHDs higher than other age groups.

Group 2, aged 23 to 29, are the up and coming parents. I dubbed Group 2 starters, because members of this group are at an age when they have finished college and have their first jobs. This group had only three significant pairings with other groups on the SAHD individual variables, and all of these positioned SAHDs with the lowest mean. The members of this group may be like the SAHDs who said they felt they needed to have a job in their 20s; members of this group seem to be more work-focused. I suspect that this will change when they reach their 30s, as it did for the SAHDs I interviewed.

Group 1 respondents have grown up in a milieu of cable TV channels that cater to specific market interests. It is easy to watch a lot of television without ever watching the news. Additionally, this group is increasingly communicating via social networking venues such as facebook and twitter, which do not carry news in the same manner as the older media venues (e.g. newspapers). This group will be getting their information from other media venues than the ones I explored. That does not mean they will not hear about

SAHDs. SAHDs currently use blogs, and I expect some also use facebook and twitter. It does mean, however, that people using these social media will need to be more active in seeking information about SAHDs. Unlike newspapers, which are delivered as a package of pre-organized and highlighted information, social media requires users to opt in to groups discussing topics of their interest. This could cause a communication gap.

When I began this study, I considered the older people in society to have grown up in the philosophy of modernity, with a break in successive generations into postmodern diversity. The media aspect of my survey leads me to think that there is yet another break between the young adults I labeled Group 1, and all other age groups in my study. This group relies heavily on social network communication that is largely based on self and what is popular. This group was the least informed, and most beset with stereotypes of SAHDs. However, the stereotypes run mostly toward positive attitudes of SAHDs. I think future SAHDs will find more acceptance with this group.

Overall, respondents for my survey were born between 1917 and 1992. During this time in U.S. history, U.S. urban areas increased while rural farming areas decreased, technology grew exponentially, education levels of the overall population increased, children began attending kindergarten and then preschool—more education away from home, the population became more mobile (travel and changing residences), and commerce increased. All these descriptors of change describe a *Gesellschaft-Gemeinschaft* shift. In the literature review above, I argued that this also represents a change in mindset. Historically, the turning point can be seen in the late 60s, early 70s youth unrest years, turning against tradition. I now also argue that the significant

differences between age groups in my survey, specifically between Groups 1, 3 and Group 4 indicate such a mindset shift.

Is the Stay-At-Home Dad a sustainable trend? This trend is driven, in part, by economic recessions. There have been several economic down-turns in the recent past, and the current recession is far from over. On these grounds alone, I expect the SAHD trend to continue and even increase. Wives play an integral part in this trend that I had not expected. Without this involvement, I think fewer men would have thought of this option. Without this support, I think some men would have given up the role in the transition stage. Additionally, SAHDs are mostly dependent on their age peers for in-group support and validation. Support from the older generation is sketchy, and the younger adult groups have no reason to “buy-in” at this time. This means that there could be a break in the trend from one age group to the next. Even among the SAHDs themselves, very few have garnered information from “old-timers.” The support group websites are the only “traditions” being passed down. Respective to these age issues and overall lack of continuity between them, the SAHD trend has tenuous footing. However, it has survived as such at least the length with which the U.S. Census Bureau has been tracking this trend—25 years.

I have no illusions that there will one day be an egalitarian utopia some time in the future. I do, however, think that SAHDs are not going to go away, and that their numbers will fluctuate. In the near future I expect the current recession may reap a “bumper crop.” SAHDs have shown that they are capable of nurturing their young children. They are proving that men are capable of expanding their roles much like the

thousands of women who modeled themselves after the mythical Rosie the Riveter during World War II. Women showed that they could work in assembly lines, making airplanes and flying them to the bases where they were needed—even under fire. It has taken the greater part of a century, but in 1993 women were first allowed to fly fighter planes in the U.S. If women can stretch their roles and be accepted, I think men can as well.

Using the dual tactic of surveying the general public and interviewing Stay-At-Home Dads has allowed me to investigate this trend through Structuration Theory. It has provided contextual information that one or the other could not provide alone. It has also allowed me to understand the possible pitfalls and strengths of what stymies and drives this trend. This holistic view leads me to believe that the societal structure is being reified in favor of SAHDs.

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## APPENDIX A

### SAHD Demographics from 2009 Interviews

SAHD Pseudonym	SAHD Age	Income Range (see scale below)	Education Level (see scale below)	Time as SAHD	# of Children	Age of Children (in years)
Kinjiru	38	5	High School (+ 2.5 yrs college)	1	2	11, 7
Rick	37	10	MA		2	2.5, 6
Brad	32	9	High School	2.5	2	2.5 (twins)
Captain	44	2	High School & professional program	4	1	4 (adopted)
Dan	36	9	High School	.5	1	1.5 (adopted)
Jim	45	8	High School & professional program	5.5	2	4, 6
Bob	35	10	BA (2)	1	1	11 months
Jason	31	10	BA	5	3	5, 3 6 weeks
John 153	49	8	Ph.D.	10	3	9, 8, 3
Daffy Duck	34	9	High School	4	3	4 (twins), 2
Jake	32	10	MA	2	2	22 months 6 weeks
Average	37.6	8 (\$50,000-74,999)	H.S. +	3.6	2	Roughly 4
Range	31 - 49	2 - 10	H.S. - Ph.D.	.5 - 10	1 - 3	6 wks. to 11

Annual Family Income:

- 1: Under \$10,000
- 2: \$10,000 to \$14,999
- 3: \$15,000 to \$19,999
- 4: \$20,000 to \$24,999
- 5: \$25,000 to \$29,999
- 6: \$30,000 to \$39,999
- 7: \$40,000 to \$49,999
- 8: \$50,000 to \$74,999
- 9: \$75,000 to \$99,999
- 10: \$100,000 and over

Education Level Finished:

- 1: High School or equivalent
- 2: Professional program
- 3: Associate's degree
- 4: Bachelor's degree
- 5: Master's degree
- 6: Doctoral degree

**SAHD Demographics from 2006 Interviews**

SAHD Pseudonym	SAHD Age	Education Level	Time as SAHD ( in Years)	# of Children	Age of Children (in years)
Marc	38	Ph. D.	4	3	3, 2, 1
Dennis	37	2 BA, MA	2	2	22 months, 4 months
Jack	39	MA	5.5	3	5, 3, 2 weeks
Blake	27	High School	18 months	1	18 months
Tom	46	MA	5	2	13, 6
Robert	48	BS	3	1	3
Thomas	39	High School & non-degree programs	9 months	1	9 months
Harrison	44	BS	2.5	4 & one coming	10, 6, 3, 2
Andrew	34	MA	15 months	1	19 months
Average	39.1	BA	2.8	2	3.65
Range	27 - 48	H.S. - Ph.D.	9 months - 5.5 years	1 - 4	2 weeks - 13 years

**Additional Interviews of Former SAHDs, Children Now Grown**

SAHD Pseudonym	Age of Interviewee when a SAHD	Time Frame	Education Level	Time as SAHD	# of Children	Age of Children When Began (in years)
Bill	25 (Interviewed 2009)	60s	High school at the time, now MA	6 months	2	4, 2 months
Henry	Began at 43 when son was a year old (Interviewed 2006)	80s	2 years college & trade school	15 years	1	1
Charlie	Began at 36 (Interviewed 2006)	90s	BA, now Ph.D.	2.5 years	2	10, 8